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THE ROMANCE OF A
MEDICI WARRIOR

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Hayes.

Giovanni delle Bande Nere

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THE ROMANCE OF A MEDICI WARRIOR

BEING THE TRUE STORY OF GIOVANNI
DELLE BANDE NERE, TO WHICH
IS ADDED THE LIFE OF HIS SON,
COSIMO I., GRAND DUKE OF TUSCANY

A STUDY IN HEREDITY

BY

CHRISTOPHER HARE *2*

*With Photogravure Frontispiece and
Sixteen other Illustrations*

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GIOVANNI, THE MEDICI WARRIOR

“ La guerre est ma patrie.
Mon harnois est ma maison,
Et en toute saison
Combattre c'est ma vie.”



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THE ROMANCE OF A MEDICI WARRIOR

PART I

PROLOGUE

Concerning Caterina Sforza, the Madonna of Forli

OF the warrior women whom Italy delights to honour, one stands forth supreme above all others : Caterina Sforza, known to fame as the great Madonna of Forli. She was the illegitimate daughter of Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan ; was born in 1462, and brought up with tender affection by his mother, Bianca Visconti, until she was eight years old, when, on the marriage of Galeazzo with Bona of Savoy, she, like a dutiful wife of those days, received the child of his mistress Lucrezia into her home as one of her own family.

During five years Caterina lived in luxury, and received the elaborate education of the eldest princess of her house, until the first tragedy of her eventful life took place : the murder of her father at the porch of San Stefano, as he was about to hear High Mass on Christmas day, while the anthem rang out : "*Sic transit gloria mundi.*"

Before his death, Galeazzo had arranged a marriage for his favourite daughter with Girolamo Riario, the nephew of Pope Sixtus IV. Caterina was barely

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fifteen when, after a magnificent wedding, she rode in state across Italy to her new home, the splendid palace of the Corsini on the banks of the Tiber, at Rome. She was a beautiful girl, full of spirit and energy, and she soon became so high in favour with the Pope that she was looked upon as the very fountain of honour, and petitions for place and power had to pass through her hands. During her life in the Papal city, four children were born to the Countess Riario, the eldest a daughter named Bianca, while the others were boys, Ottaviano the heir being born in 1479.

Two years later, in 1481, the city and domain of Forli in Romagna, between the Adriatic and the Apennines, was bestowed upon Girolamo by the Pope, who loaded him with honours and wealth. When the Count and Countess set forth to their new possession, we are told that for a whole week long trains of laden mules might have been seen passing out of Rome, guarded by men-at-arms, bearing immense treasure of costly stuffs, tapestries, jewels, gold and silver plate, and untold riches, over the rough mountain bridle-paths and on by the Via Emilia to Forli.

In this brief sketch we cannot follow the wars in which Riario as Generalissimo of the Pope took part, and the crafty diplomacy by which he obtained Ravenna, Cervia, Imola, and all the country round. When Pope Sixtus died, Caterina was on a visit to Rome, and in the tumult and disorder which followed, she showed her fearless temper and masterly craft by at once taking possession of the Castello St. Angelo and, from that stronghold, making terms for her husband with the jealous cardinals. She thus

obtained for him a large sum of money and a safe-conduct for himself and his family to Forli. Girolamo now devoted himself to beautifying the old cathedral and to strengthening the fortress of Ravaldino, the strong castello which commanded the whole of the city. For this purpose he had to raise heavy taxes, which caused growing discontent amongst the people, and when he lightened their burden, he could no longer satisfy his greedy courtiers nor pay his mercenary soldiers.

In the spring of 1487, Girolamo was dangerously ill at Imola, about sixteen miles to the north-east of Forli, and his wife was nursing him when there came news, one night, that the seneschal of the palace at Forli had murdered the castellan and seized Fort Ravaldino. Caterina instantly ordered her horse, by desperate riding reached Forli at midnight with a small escort straggling after her, and demanded from the seneschal an account of his conduct. Codronchi, in dismay, parleyed awhile, but admitted her into the fortress with one attendant at daybreak. There is no record of what took place within those grim walls, but the undaunted princess came forth in safety, appointed a trusty friend, Tommaso Feo, as castellan of the citadel, and rode back to Imola with the rebel seneschal. "And the next morning, two hours after sunrise, the Lady Caterina gave birth to a son," says the chronicler.

This amazing adventure gives us some idea of the gallant spirit and courage of the Countess of Forli. These were shown with still more striking force, in the terrible tragedy which took place a few months later,

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One April day of the year 1488, Caterina was resting in the secluded quiet of her private chamber in the palace of Forli, when of a sudden there rose a muffled clamour in the distance, and the sound grew until she could distinguish the sound of many voices and tramping feet. Then came a violent knocking at her door, which was flung open and a young knight in hunting costume broke in abruptly. He stood there a moment gasping for breath and staring at her with wild eyes, and she recognised him as a special favourite of her husband.

"Speak your message, man ; I am ready !" cried the Countess, whose instinct warned her of some fearful disaster.

Andreas Ricci threw himself at her feet.

"Madonna, I beseech you, flee at once !" he gasped. "The Count Girolamo is basely murdered . . . cast headlong from an upper chamber into the piazza as I rode by . . . The people rise in tumult . . . Beware the Orsi ; they are at my heels. . . ."

"No ; flight is impossible ! There are my helpless children. But listen, Andreas. The citadel is ours and the castellan is faithful !" she added, with a ring of battle in her voice. "Go thither this instant and bid Tommaso Feo hold out to the last extremity, and never yield the Fort of Ravaldino, though I myself implore him on my knees to do so ! Command that he straightway send couriers to Bentivoglio, Lord of Bologna, and to my Uncle Lodovico at Milan."

"Madonna, let me save you first !" pleaded Andreas. "I will bar the door and sell my life dearly to keep back the traitors while you escape."

"This is madness !" she cried. "Our only hope

is in Feo ; his guns command the city, and while he holds out, none will dare to touch us. Go, I command," and she stamped her foot, pointing to the door with an imperious gesture.

The young man had no choice but to obey, and Caterina hastened in search of her children. Her face was white and drawn, but there was a dauntless flash in her eye. This was the hour for action ; there would be a lifetime for tears hereafter. Already the alarm had spread and she met fugitives of the household, who slunk away shamefaced at the sight of their mistress ; but she wasted no reproaches on the cowardly crew, and had barely joined her children before armed men dashed in upon them. The Lady of Forli faced them with cool courage, erect and stately, a splendid figure of avenging fate. This was the moment which Lorenzo Orsi, the chief conspirator, had dreaded, for his followers shrank before that imperious glance which ere now had quelled the rage of a rebellious mob. Caterina was quick to seize her opportunity, and with strong, fearless words she accused the conspirators of their crime and called down the vengeance of Heaven upon them.

"Did you think to find a weak, defenceless woman and children upon whom you might complete your murderous hate ? Beware ! for if you but touch one of us, my castellan will bombard your city until not one stone remains upon another."

It was a tragic moment, the crisis of her fate, upon which hung the future of her house, but she passed through it in triumph. "Who is your leader ?" she asked, and her voice rang through the room with an accent of sharp, stinging disdain. She turned upon Lorenzo Orsi. "Take us to a place of security,

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and bear it well in mind that you will answer for us with your own life."

Sounds of a tramping multitude had ere now reached her ears ; she knew that the work of pillage and destruction had already begun in the palace, and that her appeal was not a moment too soon. The scowling Lorenzo consulted his brother Cecco, and for very shame they consented. They knew that by so doing they would have the whole Riario family in their power, and with one blow could destroy them on the morrow ; so they were taken in stealthy haste through the riotous streets to the Orsi Palace and securely locked up in the dungeon.

Meanwhile the conspirators found the castellan resolute in his refusal to give up the keys of the citadel, that massive building, with its central keep and four round towers, which stood at the apex of the fan-shaped city, and commanded the whole of it. Lorenzo and Cecco Orsi began to be alarmed at their position, and, in a fit of panic, they rode off that night to Cesena, about twelve miles to the south, and there and then they offered the city and territory of Forli to the Holy See, in the person of Cardinal Savelli.

The good man was much perturbed in mind, but he dared not refuse so rich a gift and " thus cause loss to the Pope." An escort was hurriedly collected, the bishop's nag was saddled, and he reluctantly left his comfortable home to amble back to Forli in the dark hours of the night with the Orsi brothers, nothing doubting that he was thus doing good service to his spiritual lord.

The next day he hastened to call upon the deposed Countess, and was startled by her strong language.

He found that she had not the slightest intention of handing over her possessions to the Pope.

“My noble husband having been treacherously murdered, our son Ottaviano is now Count of Forli, and as he is of tender years—scarcely nine—I am regent, and bear rule in his name. You have taken a perilous step, Monsignore, for if I know the Holy Father aright, he is a man of peace and friendly to our house: not one to have dealings with murderers.”

This was a home thrust, for the night had brought counsel, and the Cardinal was not without misgivings of his own. But he had now gone too far to draw back, and when, later on, Pope Innocent’s bull of acceptance being unduly delayed, the good man took upon himself to forge one—the end was very different from what he had expected.

Meantime he did his best for the prisoners, and suggested that they should be taken from the power of the Orsi, their enemies, and placed for their better security in the gate-house above San Pietro, under the care of certain trustworthy citizens he himself would select. To this Caterina readily agreed, and that night the whole party was removed by torch-light to the gate-house chamber and there strongly guarded. But the Fort of Ravalдино still held out, with its guns pointed in defiant menace upon the city, and the conspirators compelled the Countess to send a written order to the castellan that he should resign the keys. When this failed, the Orsi were in desperate straits, and Caterina was conducted to the barred gate of the fortress that she might repeat her demand in person. Again Tommaso Feo, summoned to the ramparts, met every appeal with a curt refusal.

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There were muttered imprecations around her when Cardinal Savelli, with a vivid remembrance of her personal influence, proposed that the Countess should have a private interview with her contumacious servant, and insist upon his obedience. There was some demur at this, but at length the Orsi, in their extremity, gave consent, knowing that they held the Riario children as hostages; but they made the stipulation that three hours should be the extreme limit of time allowed for the meeting.

A time of breathless suspense followed. When at length the hour struck and the great bell of the cathedral rang to announce that the decisive moment had come, a tremendous shout of excitement uprose from the assembled crowd and half drowned the flare of trumpets. But there was no response from the citadel until the noise below grew to a tumult, and the trumpets blew louder and more furious blasts. Then Tommaso Feo slowly mounted behind the battlements and, as soon as he could make his voice heard, gravely assured the people of Forli that their sovereign lady, overcome by all the grief and horror of these last days, was taking some needful repose and he dared not disturb her slumber.

At this astounding statement the rage of the conspirators was unbounded, and they threatened instant death to all the Riario family. Guards were sent in haste to fetch all the children of the Countess to the foot of the tower, while again the summons to surrender was repeated with the most bloodthirsty threats. This time a defiant reply was hurled down by Caterina herself; she dared her foes to do their worst, for children might be more easily replaced than a citadel—yet should one hair of their heads be

touched, a worse fate awaited the city of Forli than ever befell those of Sodom and Gomorrah !

She probably felt sure that the Cardinal could not permit the cold-blooded murder of helpless children ; and so it proved, for the desolate little company was taken safely back to the gate-house prison.

After this events progressed rapidly. The couriers despatched to Bologna and Milan had sped well ; troops were soon on the way to put down the insurgents ; the leaders of the conspiracy found their position hopeless, and were compelled to flee by night. The young prince Ottaviano was proclaimed Count of Forli, with his mother as Regent, and she ruled the land with the utmost vigour and ability until the evil days came upon her, and the boundless ambition of the Borgia Pope aimed at nothing less than dominion of all Italy. Caterina Sforza had to fight, as never woman fought before, for the very existence of her little state, hemmed in and threatened on every side. She fortified her citadels, she recruited her soldiers ; while ever on horseback, she directed the manœuvres of her army and lived a warrior's life.

As a relaxation from these arduous pursuits, Caterina was twice married—first to Giacomo Feo, and then to Giovanni dei Medici, son of Pietro Francesco, nephew of Cosimo (Il Vecchio) dei Medici.* The handsomest man of his day, this young prince had been chosen by Florence as ambassador to the Lady of Forli, and their choice was justified by the favour which he won.

We remember those prophetic words of the daunt-

* Cosimo il Vecchio was the grandfather of Lorenzo the Magnificent. See Table I.

less woman when threatened with the murder of her sons—that she could replace them—and in due time she made good her defiant retort. On April 6 1498, there was born to this famous “virago,” in the Citadel of Forli, a man-child who was to resemble her more than all her other sons, who was to be the true Sforza, the supreme heir of that valiant race of condottieri, filled with their lust of battle, their matchless audacity and courage—renowned to all ages as the great warrior, Giovanni delle Bande Nere.

After the birth of this son, troubles thickened around the Sforza princess: first the loss of her young husband, the popular Medici, then the plague at Forli which decimated the city and threatened her child’s life, and finally the long and terrible siege of her last refuge, the citadel, by that ravening wolf, Cæsar Borgia, supported by all the might of the Papal army and the French troops of Louis XII. In vain did Caterina defend her castello with such heroic courage as to call forth the warm admiration of the very soldiers who fought against her and who “almost hoped she would win.” The struggle was hopeless from the first, yet the gallant Countess held out longer than her neighbours, the Malatesti, the Manfredi, and other lords of Romagna; and not until the beginning of the year 1500 was she driven from her last defences, wounded as she fought like a lioness at bay, and compelled to own herself vanquished.

Caterina was taken captive to Rome, cast into the prison of Saint Angelo, and treated by the Borgia Pope with shameful cruelty in the hope of breaking her proud spirit and perchance silencing her for ever in the oblivion of death. During sixteen months

the unfortunate lady endured unspeakable misery while her foes played with her as a cat with a mouse, until at length she owed her freedom to the chivalry of an unlooked-for friend. The French general, Yves d'Allègre, rode into Rome with only three companions to demand the release of the Countess of Forli, declaring, in the name of France, that "on n'emprisonne pas les dames."

The French army was close by, at Viterbo, and Alexander VI. had no choice but to set his prisoners free ; and thus it was that on June 30, 1501, Caterina Sforza came forth from the grim dungeon of the Castel St. Angelo, with her few faithful followers, and rested awhile in the Riario Palace to renew her failing strength.

Her children were all safe in Florentine territory, which was now her only safe refuge, and she longed above all things for the sight of her beloved youngest born, her Giovanni, who was at present in the power of his uncle Lorenzo dei Medici, and whom she had not seen for sixteen long, weary months.

CHAPTER I

The coming of Caterina Sforza to Florence, July 1501, after her captivity in Rome—Caterina meets her son, the child Giovanni.

ONE golden afternoon of mid-July, in the year 1501, the people of Florence, ever hungering to see and hear some new thing, made their way in eager groups towards the ancient Porta Romana. News had spread far and wide through the City of the Lilies that a herald had but now arrived in haste, to claim from the Signoria a welcome for the Most Noble and Illustrious Princess Caterina Sforza, the great Madonna of Forli—a citizen of the Republic of Florence, being the widow of the Magnificent Giovanni dei Medici, the Populani, son of Pietro Francesco. . . .

Well might the fame of the great Countess of Forli have preceded her, for all Europe was still ringing with the tragic story of her exploits and her misfortunes. She was the heroine of the hour, and the citizens were prepared to receive her with acclamation alike for her own sake as for the memory of her husband, their favourite Medici, the Populani.

It was a long and tedious journey in those days from Rome to Florence, embarking at the mouth of the Tiber, following the coast-line to Livorno, and from thence more than sixty miles of riding through the hot plains of Tuscany. Yet although weak and exhausted with long suffering, Caterina knew that

each moment of weariness, of faintness and oppression, brought her nearer to her heart's desire, and her courage rose high once more as she beheld from afar the fair city of Florence, with her towers and grey battlements and stately campanile rising majestic through the dim haze of summer mist.

A cry of excitement rose from the waiting crowd as a company of horsemen was at last seen approaching through a veil of quivering dust raised by the tramping hoofs. "See, she comes! The Lady of our beloved Populani, the Countess of Forli!"

At the head of her faithful escort rode Caterina Sforza, pale and travel-worn yet proud and erect as ever, on her favourite white war horse, clad in a sweeping robe of black velvet with her face partly hidden by the flowing widow's veil. She was met at the entrance of the Porta Romana by the chief officers of the Signoria, preceded by the banner of the Republic, and she received their homage with stately courtesy. Soon the cavalcade was joined by various influential friends of Giovanni dei Medici, such as the Salviati and others, but the widowed lady's brow darkened as she noted the absence of her brother-in-law. She imperiously demanded the reason of this disrespect, and was told that the Magnificent Lorenzo dei Medici was about to meet her on her arrival at the Palazzo Scali, there to hold converse concerning her inheritance.

This was to her a matter of supreme importance and, full of anxious thought, Caterina scarcely noticed the cries of enthusiasm or the deep murmur of interest and curiosity which greeted her as she rode slowly onwards, by the banks of the broad, shining Arno,

glittering like silver in the sunlight, into the shadowed street of the Por Santa Maria with its grim palaces on either side. Through the crowded Vachereccia passed the cavalcade, turned round the Piazza della Signoria, and skirted the frowning fortress of the Bargello. One thought, one hope now filled the heart of the warrior Countess ; she was about to see once more the child for whom she craved with such hungry longing, the boy Giovanni, dearer to her than all her elder sons, the tame Riario troop, who were safely bestowed in the mountain fastness of Trebbio.

She had known bitter fear when news had reached her that Giovanni was to be placed under the guardianship of his Uncle Lorenzo, but of late the child had been in the care of Bianca Riario, the eldest-born and only daughter of Caterina, who for this purpose had been suffered to leave the convent where she had found shelter in those troublous times, while awaiting her marriage with Troile, Count of San Secondo. This gentle girl had watched over her precious little half-brother with loving care, in the Palazzo of Giuliano Scali, and had written constant letters to her mother to assure her of his well-being. Now the moment was at hand when she was to give a last proof of her devotion by delivering over the boy in safety.

In the dim grandeur of a stately tapestried chamber, Bianca was anxiously awaiting the coming of her mother, to whom she looked up with adoring reverence not unmixed with awe. This girl, who had now reached the mature age of twenty-three, was strangely like Caterina Sforza, but we gather from her portraits that all the features were blurred and exaggerated,

while at the same time the face was made attractive by the expression, full of charm and sweetness. So at least thought the companion who shared her hour of anxious waiting, the old friend and confident of the family, Francesco Fortunati, Priest of Cascina near Pisa and Canon of San Lorenzo at Florence. This good man had been devoted to the service of Giovanni dei Medici, and had watched over his last hours at the Baths of San Pietro near Padua, in September 1498. Faithful to the vow made by his master's death-bed, Fortunati had thenceforth dedicated his life to the watchful care of the infant son—that firebrand who was to rouse and startle all Italy, and to outdo all the warlike deeds of his Sforza ancestors.

But as yet all this was hidden in the dim future, although it needed no prophet to foretell that Giovanni was not cast in the same mould as other boys.

As the priest rose from his carved cedar chair and stood in the full light of the high west window, his was a face and figure to command attention and respect in any society. Past middle age, with grizzled hair falling low on his broad forehead, his piercing blue eyes glowed with perennial youth, while his mobile countenance reflected every passing mood, now puckered with anxious thought and then, in a flash, beaming radiant with broad humour. He had been roused from his quiet talk by shouts of merry laughter from the secluded garden of the Palazzo, far below, and as he looked down through the open window, he cried out with eager delight :

“ Quick, my Lady Bianca ! Come and see our little Giovanni ! He has driven that good patient Anna with reins and whip through the myrtle bushes,

and now nothing will serve but he must bridle the marble lions of the fountain and ride them one after the other, with sounding blows of his wooden sword ! If his lady mother could but see him now ! ”

The young girl joined him with a slow, graceful sweep of her tall, slim figure, and looked on for a few moments in silence. Then a wistful smile crept over her face as she spoke in a low, troubled voice :

“ Then you think I have done right, my father, to leave him to his play until the last moment ? There is no holding him quiet within four walls, and if the boy were restless and angry, what might not happen when he meets his mother ? It is not possible that he can remember her after all these months, a child of little more than three years old. What if he should strike her ? . . . ”

“ Have no fear, my dear lady,” interrupted Fortunati. “ Our little Giovanni is the apple of her eye and can do no wrong. They will be fitly matched, the mother and son.”

“ You are right there, my father,” replied Bianca thoughtfully. “ Madonna never cared for the other boys as she does for this little half-brother. I can see her now with the scorn in her eyes, as she drove Ottaviano from her presence when he had tamely suffered Messire Feo, his stepfather, to smite him on the face.”

“ Upon my soul, she did well ! ” exclaimed Fortunati, with his rich, quiet laugh. “ They are not worthy of her, that smug Riaro brood. They paid abject court to the Pope while he treated their illustrious mother with such cruelty, until I could not refrain from telling them that I hoped God would forgive their perfidy, as it seemed to me that

the devil had deprived them of all feeling and memory! Truly they have their reward. What of Ottaviano, who has waxed so fat that Giovanna de Montefeltro refuses to give him her daughter in marriage? He may well fawn upon his uncle the Cardinal to make him Bishop of Viterbo, and I hear that Cæsar is to be Archbishop of Pisa. Our little prince yonder will not amble through life in such peaceful style as those precocious gluttons!"

"No, indeed," said his sister warmly. "In him his mother lives again, with all the warlike spirit of our ancestor, the Attendolo Sforza."

"May I live to see him a great leader of men!" cried the priest in his deep, vibrating voice. "May he seize the sword when it falls from the hand of the great Madonna, and avenge her wrongs! . . ."

At that moment, a triumphal peal rang out from the campanile of the Piazza dei Pinti close at hand, and the eager listeners soon heard the tramp of hoofs on the cobble stones as the cavalcade drew near, then came to an abrupt halt outside the great gateway. Bianca Riario had risen to her feet and stood tremulous with expectation until the massive door was thrown open; she looked up to see her mother, the most illustrious Countess of Forli, enter with slow steps, supported by her chancellor, who guided her to the inlaid chair of state placed ready in the centre of the chamber. She was followed by a splendid wolfhound which, after a distrustful glance around, took up its position on guard at the feet of his mistress.

It was a moment of painful revelation to poor Bianca, for she would scarcely have recognised that pale, thin face, haggard with fever and fasting, worn almost to a shadow with the terrible suffering of long

sleepless nights in the Papal dungeon, with rage and anxiety and sorrow. The warrior Princess of Forli was changed into an old woman, yet that stirring, eventful life had been crowded into thirty-nine years as we measure time by the calendar.

All these impressions had passed through the young girl's mind in a flash of insight, as she came forth with tender respect, to fall on her knees and kiss the hand of her mother who bent forward to clasp her in a warm embrace.

"My good Bianca, tell me where is he? When shall I see him?" she asked in breathless haste.

But before her daughter had time to reply the great door was again thrown open and "His Magnificence, the Lord Lorenzo dei Medici" was pompously announced. Bianca shrank back timidly to the side of the watchful Fortunati, who had not yet had opportunity for a word of greeting to his mistress. The newcomer was a man about middle height, imposing in his splendid doublet of green brocade with a jewelled collar, and a richly embroidered band from which hung his sword with enamelled silver hilt. His thin, pallid face, with the shifty eyes and pursed-up mouth, had none of the charm and beauty which had distinguished his brother the "Populani," although Caterina could not ignore a certain haunting family likeness. Lorenzo came forward with easy assurance, and a broad sweep of his plumed velvet "berretta," as with ostentatious humility he bent to make obeisance and lightly touch with his lips the hand of his undaunted sister-in-law. She drew herself up with proud dignity, and barely inclined her head in greeting, while the wolf-hound at her feet gave a low growl.



Brogi, photo.

Vasari: Florence.

CATERINA SFORZA, MADONNA OF FORLÌ.



Quite undisturbed by this unpropitious reception, the head of the Medici waited for no invitation to be seated, but threw himself into a massive carved chair and began, in a somewhat aggressive manner :

“Madonna Caterina, you have received due notice of my proposals, through the notary Leonardo Strozzi, with regard to the succession of my deeply mourned brother, Giovanni of sacred memory. But you are no doubt aware that large sums were advanced to him from our joint property, to the great detriment of his patrimony, and were spent by him in reckless extravagance at Forli, in princely gifts of silks, velvets, brocades, jewels. . . .”

“All these expenses have no concern with you, Signor Lorenzo,” interrupted the Countess imperiously. These generous gifts of my dear husband were paid for from his private purse, and must not be charged on the great commercial enterprises and funds which are in your care and of which the half belongs to my son Giovanni as heir to his father. But first of all I claim for myself, by special bequest, the Villa of Castello, which from its situation and nearness to Florence is so well suited for my abode.”

“Madonna, it has ever been my desire to act both justly and generously towards you and my nephew ; but surely you know that, in our division, the Castle of Trebbio, the Palace at Florence, that of Castel del Bosco and the estates around are assigned to you, but no mention has been made of the Villa Castello, which remains in my possession. . . .”

“Do you think, my brother Lorenzo, that I will suffer my boy to be robbed of his birthright, as is the way of loving uncles ? ” broke in the Countess of

Forli, with fierce vehemence, and a battle royal was imminent when Fortunati came to the rescue.

He had watched the contest with keen anxiety, as the suave, level tones of Lorenzo so dangerously excited the hot temper of his mistress, but as his imploring signs had no effect, he now came boldly forward, and with wonderful tact and discretion poured oil upon the troubled waters. He had just promised to meet on the morrow Leonardo Strozzi, the notary of his Magnificence, and to discuss fully all the questions in dispute, when a sudden deep growl from the wolf-hound distracted the attention of his listeners. The dog's threatening gaze was fixed upon the door, which opened at that moment to reveal a splendid little figure—a sturdy boy like a pictured St. John, with curly hair and dark glowing eyes. But before Caterina had risen with a cry to welcome her darling, a small terrier sprang from the child's arms and ran forward, yelping with the impertinence of a spoiled pet at the intruder, who with one spring seized the noisy cur in his great fangs. Quick as lightning, the boy fearlessly rushed forward in defence and caught the wolf-hound by the throat with his baby hands.

Furiously the fierce animal shook off the stifling grasp and turned upon the child; Bianca lost her presence of mind and screamed aloud, while Fortunati overcame his mortal dread and blindly stumbled across the great chamber, to find that the Countess herself, with a word and a blow, had mastered her dog and caught the struggling Giovanni in her strong arms. In vain he kicked her with all his might and fought out with his clenched fists, while the Magnificent Lorenzo quietly watched the scene with cynical

amusement and the others looked on with trembling dread. But a few minutes later the indomitable Madonna had achieved another victory; she had tamed the fiery spirit so nearly akin to her own, and the child of her passionate love sat happily on her knee and laughed up in her face.

Breathless and triumphant, Caterina had become herself once more and, with her flushed cheeks and shining eyes, for the moment she had cast off the weight of her years and sorrows. The gentle Bianca turned aside to hide her tears of joy and relief that the dreaded meeting had ended so well, while even the sober and experienced Fortunati was aglow with silent admiration of his beloved lady, and was now relieved of his worst fear that an open rupture would take place between her and her grasping kinsman.

In the joy of her satisfied love and pride, Caterina Sforza listened with unwonted patience to the smooth promises and courtly civility with which the astute Lorenzo took his leave. The scene which had passed before him, and the mother's amazing mastery of the boy's temper, had made a strong impression upon the uncle's calculating nature.

"The lion-cub will need a strong hand," he muttered to himself, with the comfortable assurance that he himself would be the lion-tamer for both the mother and her son.

CHAPTER II

Caterina Sforza in Florence—Her strife with Lorenzo dei Medici
for the possession of her boy Giovanni—He is hidden in a convent
—Death of Lorenzo—Peaceful days for Caterina before her end.

IT was no bed of roses which Caterina Sforza, the widow of the Magnificent Giovanni dei Medici, found awaiting her in Florence, the city of her adoption. The temporary truce with her brother-in-law Lorenzo had not been of long duration, for she would yield none of her rights and fought stoutly for them. Above all, Caterina claimed the Villa of Castello, her favourite amongst all the Medici homes; so conveniently near Florence, beautifully situated on the sheltered slope of a hill, secluded in the midst of lovely gardens such as Boccaccio loved to sing, and which as we know in later days called forth the enthusiasm of Montaigne and his companions. Weakened as she was in health, the balmy air in those groves of myrtle and arbutus, of oleanders and clambering roses, had an invincible attraction for her, until in a reckless hour, the undaunted warrior lady took forcible possession of the coveted villa, and was only driven thence by an armed force.

This was unwise on her part, for Lorenzo, furious at her audacity, was driven to extreme measures, and asserted his legal right to the guardianship of her precious Giovanni. The mother knew that if once the boy were in the hands of his uncle, the worst

might be feared, for a Medici would shrink from no crime to achieve his ends. Once indeed the child was snatched from her by a stratagem, but she followed hot-foot on his tracks and regained him, in defiance of Lorenzo and his minions. But that episode had shaken all feeling of security, and although she still had faithful friends like Francesco Fortunati, Caterina had learnt that she was no longer supreme. Her daughter Bianca had left her to become the wife of the gallant young Troile dei Rossi, Count of San Secondo, and she could look for no help from her tame Riario sons. In so grave an emergency this princess of the Renaissance saved her little hero by a subterfuge copied from the antique. She may have remembered how Achilles once found safety amongst women, for she herself took the six-year old Giovanni, at dead of night, to the Annalena Convent in the Via Romana, opposite the gate of the Boboli Gardens. It was a bold stroke to leave her precious treasure to the care of the Dominican nuns, that he might dwell amongst them and be clothed in the dress of the order, like a novice of tender years ; but here, under the all-powerful protection of the Church, the young heir remained in safety during eight months.

We may imagine that this *enfant terrible*, exuberant with life and spirits, fearless and defiant, full of the most audacious mischief, must have given the sisterhood a very lively time. Still they were devoted to the strange little guest, and Giovanni never forgot their kindness, which secured them in after-years not only his favour, but that of the Grand Dukes his descendants. We may still see the remains of that ancient Hospice, founded in 1455 by Annalena the daughter of Galeotto Malatesta and his

wife, Maria degli Orsini; and we may pass under the stone doorway on whose moss-grown architrave is sculptured a bishop enthroned and two coats of arms with the inscription: "*Hospitium Rodolpho Nobilis Famillae.*"

With gallant courage the Countess of Forli still struggled to hold her own, undaunted by the sea of troubles which surged upon her on every side. She was persecuted from afar by the Pope, worried by constant demands from her Riario sons, while she had the utmost difficulty in obtaining her nominal income from her estates without the closest supervision. But one day there came to her news which revived her old spirit, for Lorenzo dei Medici (son of Pier Francesco) was dead, leaving the vast possessions which he had accumulated with such grasping avarice to his incapable and weakly son Pietro Francesco. Caterina was not one to make a cringing show of lament over the death of her brother-in-law; rather was hers the fierce Pagan exultation of one whose most dangerous foe had been removed from her path.

She lost not a moment, but rode in haste to the Annalena Convent and carried off her Giovanni from the peaceful cloister where he had brought so rare a breath of life and adventure. He would be safe now, for the headship of the Medici family had fallen to one who was no match for the Sforza princess. Indeed she was soon firmly established in her beloved Villa of Castello, amidst her flowers and fruit, her horses and dogs, her well-stocked farms, and a busy crowd of prosperous dependants. The warrior lady, who had once been at the head of an army and had fought like a condottiere in defence of her besieged

castle, now found an outlet for her restless energy in this patriarchal life, the wise management, and minute supervision of her estates. But her chief interest was to watch over the training of her boy, whom she would have made an accomplished scholar as well as a great captain. Caterina herself, like other high-born ladies of the Renaissance, had received the best classical education of the day, and desired "to have Giovanni gifted with every talent, and to procure for him masters who would render him expert in every exercise suitable to his rank." But there were some things beyond the power of even the despotic Madonna. The child who had inherited her dauntless courage, her fierce, passionate adventurous nature, would have none of her learning, but fought his teachers and absolutely refused all scholastic instruction. He despised books; he wanted horses to break in, rivers to swim across, something to hunt and kill, and the sheer lust of fighting drove him to constant battle with all the boys on the estate who would dare to face him.

This young barbarian would obey no one but his mother; he wore out his learned tutors, as later he was to wear out his cuirasses and his swords. We may form some idea of his indomitable nature when we learn that the devoted Fortunati, in despair of finding a man strong enough to tame this child of seven, actually conceived the scheme of persuading Michelangelo to take him in hand. We are not surprised that the great sculptor declined so onerous a task and preferred to carve the "David."

Meantime Caterina Sforza was almost at the end of her strength, although her amazing vitality foretold a long and painful struggle with death. To the very

last she kept Giovanni under her firm sway, and was the only living creature who could control his turbulent boyhood. She had spent her vigour with reckless prodigality, and the final scene was drawing nigh. In vain was all the skill of her Jewish physician, Messire Lazarus, and all the medical knowledge of her times, of which we find so curious an epitome in her famous Manuscript Book of Receipts for the cure of every mortal complaint and ill that flesh is heir to, from poisoning downwards.

The Countess was ill at Castello in April 1509, but she insisted on moving to her palace on the Corso in Florence, where she took to her bed, never to rise again. Yet her undaunted spirit mastered the worn-out body, and she sent for Messire Pietro del Serra that she might dictate to him her will, in the presence of three witnesses. She would be buried without pomp or ceremony in the Convent of the Muratori of the Clarice Sisters of Santa Maria dei Reclusi, for whom she had a special affection. The nuns had sent her pomegranates and other fruits from their garden when she had seemed forsaken by all the world in her Borgia prison. As another token of her favour, she desired that her little grandchild, the illegitimate daughter of her eldest son Ottaviano, Bishop of Viterbo, should be educated in this convent, which stands at the end of the Via Ghibellina, behind Santa Croce.

As a citizen of Florence, Caterina left rich legacies to the city charities, to Santa Maria degli Fiori, and to the Convents of Fiesole. But the main bulk of the Medici property came to her well-beloved son Giovanni, as his father's heir. Until his eighteenth year he was to remain under the care of his guardians,

“ the Venerable Messire Francesco Fortunati, priest,” and the “ Spectabile Messire Jacopo son of Giovanni Salviati,” one of the noblest, wealthiest, and most respected citizens of Florence. We find a Moorish slave named Mora Bona left as a special bequest to her youngest son. The Villa of Castel del Bosco is given to Galeazzo Riario, her third son, as she probably considered the two eldest well provided for by their fat benefices.

Having thus settled all her worldly affairs and received the last rites of the Church, the brave woman calmly endured the long-drawn-out agony of a splendid physique, fighting inch by inch to the very last against death. The end came on May 28, 1509, when the solemn tolling of the bells of San Lorenzo, close by, gave notice to the world that the great Sforza princess, the Madonna of Forli, was passing away. She was only forty-six years of age, scarcely beyond middle life, but her attenuated frame, her drawn features, and snow-white hair, all bore witness to her exhausting life of ceaseless contest and strain, to be measured not by hours but by heart-throbs.

To her devoted friend, the priest Francesco Fortunati, she had not only left the guardianship of the heir Giovanni who was to avenge her wrongs and carry on her dauntless course of unquenchable energy, but he was entrusted with the care of “ all her books, writings, letters, and all other public and private papers, whatever they might be, which were in her possession.” To the good canon’s faithful fulfilment of his important trust, we are most deeply indebted for the materials of her story.

When the funeral was over, Fortunati’s first instinct was to take his charge away to the simpler life

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at Castello, where he himself could carry out his literary legacy in the midst of Caterina's books and papers. The fame of this untamed boy of eleven had spread far and wide amongst the diplomatic Medici, and we find that from Rome itself, princes and cardinals took quite a paternal interest in this half-fledged warrior of their race. Giovanni was fortunate in the affection of his other guardian, Jacopo Salviati, whose wife Lucrezia, the daughter of the great Lorenzo dei Medici, loved him as her own son and sought to tame him with the society of her many children. Troubled by the thought of the motherless boy at this crisis of his fate, the kind lady resolved to cheer his loneliness at Castello, and to take her little daughter Maria, his favourite playfellow.

So it came about that a few days later, when the young heir was wandering through the lovely gardens of the villa, in gloomy depression, he came across his friends riding up the great avenue of plane trees. With a bound of delight, he joined the ladies and conducted them with eager welcome to the sunny rose-clad portico.

"You must come to look at the new mare," cried the boy; "she is a perfect beauty; and it was the Cardinal dei Medici who sent her. You should see her paces: as gentle as a dove and as swift as a greyhound! Come, Maria, for here is Messire Fortunati to play the host to your mother."

Madonna Lucrezia's permission was readily given and the two children joyfully set forth to the stables, where Maria was called upon to admire all the points of the new favourite, La Savoya, to feed it from her hand and stroke its velvet skin. Then Giovanni called for a bridle, and springing on the bare back of

the little mare, he rode her round the meadow to show off his splendid horsemanship, and brought her back, gently curvetting, to the girl, who clapped her hands with enthusiasm. Then nothing would satisfy him but she must go round to the kennels and see and admire the last wolf-hound puppies. Giovanni had inherited his mother's passion for horses and dogs, while if little Maria was inwardly afraid of some of these formidable pets, she bravely hid her fears, and was eloquent in her praise of all the creatures he loved.

Presently they strayed away under the pleached arbour, where the roses climbed and revelled in their wild luxuriance; on beyond the fresh and silvery olive trees and the yellow holy thorn; down into the valley, where the first sweet hay was drying in the balmy sunshine. There they rested on a shady bank beneath the spreading fig branches and, encouraged by her companion's unwonted gentleness, Maria found her opportunity to speak homely words of comfort and give utterance to her burning sympathy.

"Giovanni, my friend, talk to me about your mother. Were you with her at the last? Tell me all she said, all she would have you do." But the boy's bereavement was too recent for him to speak of it and so relieve the dumb oppression of his soul. His eyes were fixed in dim abstraction on the river below, winding in and out amongst the trees, gleaming like silver in the sun.

No answer came, but softly Maria spoke again.

"Madonna Caterina was so brave, so noble, like a gallant soldier rather than a mere woman. I never envied any one like your mother, Giovanni. No danger could alarm her; there was no foe she might

not face. I love to hear my father tell the story of her famous deeds; he says the world rang with her fame. How proud you must be of her! What would I give for a lion heart like hers—I who am so weak and timid!" she sighed.

"I like you best as you are, Maria," said the boy, slowly and gravely. "Of course no one can be like my mother. But you may rest content, for I will take care of you always, and fight for you against all the world. You will be useful in the home, and sit at your needlework, and care for your flowers."

If the gentle Maria was not quite satisfied with the part which she was expected to play, she made no sign. It was possibly the strong contrast between their characters which had drawn this boy and girl together from their earliest years. Although the little maiden was to thrill and shiver for many a year at the story of her hero's fierce exploits, his fighting, his reckless hunting, and his wild escapades, yet she would not have had him otherwise, though he should break her heart.

Another incident of that visit, Maria was destined never to forget. While Fortunati was absorbed in the task of going through the letters and papers of his mistress, Messire Salviati, the boy's other guardian, came to Castello to verify the inventory of his rich inheritance. The many treasures of inlaid and carved furniture, the gold and silver plate, the costly tapestry, the rare books and manuscripts, even those priceless pictures, the Primavera and the Birth of Venus, painted by Botticelli for his father—all these roused but little interest in the young heir. But when it came to a collection of old armour, Giovanni grew excited, and with eager enthusiasm pointed out

to Maria the worn cuirasses dented with blows, the bronze carbines, the straight cross-hilted swords which had seen such good service, the battered helmets, and other ancient arms.

Presently they came to an engraved casket from which the boy eagerly drew forth a long shining dagger, and cried, in ringing tones: "It was my mother's greatest treasure, sent her by the Soudan. Look, Maria; take it in your hand. Did you ever see such a marvel of workmanship? Eight-sided with notches, a blade forged of steel and silver as long as my arm from the elbow to the wrist joint, and the guard, a hollowed disk. Feel for yourself how finely it is balanced."

The young girl held the wonderful dagger with the kind of fascinated terror which she would have felt if it were a snake. Still she found courage to say, "Surely this delicate point, like a needle, would break off at the first rude blow?"

"Why, Maria, the spike is so strong that it would pierce chain armour! I wish I could show you." But she hastily interrupted:

"What are those deep channels scored on each side, towards the point?"

"Those are channels for the blood to run down. . . . There, give it me back, for you will never understand unless you see me use it!" cried Giovanni, whose fierce lust of blood was roused by the mere touch of this deadly weapon.

Maria had caught the wild look in his eye as he turned towards the open doorway, and she instinctively tightened her hold on the dagger, whose point barely grazed her wrist in the slight unconscious struggle. Extreme in all things, the boy's mood

had changed to one of wild alarm ; he threw the dangerous thing on the ground and in a moment was on his knees with his lips pressed to the wound.

“ Maria, Maria ! how do we know that this Eastern toy is not poisoned ? Let me suck out the venom ! ” he muttered in despair.

But the brave little maiden gave the lie to her pale face, and hid her trembling fears with a merry laugh, as she drew down her brocaded sleeve and vowed that she had not even a scratch. She would have done much more to win one passing smile of approval from her gallant cousin, or to avert from him one word of reproach.

CHAPTER III

The home of Giovanni in the mountain castle of Trebbio—His passion for hunting—A turbulent youth in Florence and Rome—The return of the Medici to power in Florence—Cardinal dei Medici becomes Pope as Leo. X.

THE favourite home where the boy Giovanni dei Medici spent most of his eager tempestuous boyhood was the mountain fortress of Trebbio, perched high like a falcon's nest in the wild valley of the Mugello. It is thus described to us in an old chronicle :

“ A fortified palace, situated in the Mugello, in the County of Florence, the district of Santa Maria ; a place called the Trebbio ; including a dwelling for the lord with a tower and a little meadow, a garden, stables and other buildings. Also an enclosure, that is to say a closed place for wild animals with a house near convenient to keep grain in and a cellar and other buildings of less importance ; a wild vine covering these last ; also a chestnut wood and a church near the said palace and a fountain.”

Trebbio was a true mediæval fortress, the ideal home for a young condottiere, with its massive stone walls and high towers, a moat and draw-bridge, an arsenal full of ancient arms, and a high look-out tower which commanded the country round. Here

the boy found the sword of his famous ancestor, that Muzio Attendolo who first took the name of Sforza, and on whose exploits Giovanni was never weary of dwelling. The wild savage stronghold suited his temper exactly; here, this lad of twelve was practically his own master, for he took but small account of the unfortunate tutors who were provided for him, in constant succession. The seneschal and bailiff, Antonio Vaini, to whom the two guardians from afar carefully doled out a certain amount of money, had more influence over the young heir than any one else. His great passion was for hunting, and into this he threw himself with whole-hearted devotion.

In that hilly country, then covered with thick forests and rough brushwood stretching almost to the gates of Florence, there was abundance of game, which found shelter amidst the rocks and briars. Here Giovanni flew his goshawks or went out with his dogs and had excellent sport, for the valley of the Mugello was noted for its exquisite quails and for the "tordi"—those delicious thrushes of Tuscany, fed on juniper and arbutus—which the good Fortunati so thoroughly appreciated.

The young hunter made a special study of his dogs, for which the Countess of Forli had always been famous. He had a breed selected for their swiftness, which meant a broad chest and long stretch, with strong legs, not too short; and he admired a finely pointed muzzle, a good chin, and a skin like velvet. His hounds must also be intelligent and run well in couples. As for his falcons, he chose them strong on the wing, of red plumage, well feathered, and with short legs; they should be free and willing in their



Anderson, photo.

Raphael: Pitti Gallery, Florence.

POPE LEO X. AND TWO CARDINALS.

flight, of great fierceness yet easy to hood, and with a proud, upright carriage when borne on the wrist.

Wherever the young lord went through his wide estates, his people loved him for his genial ways, his open heart and hand like his mother. Everywhere he was welcomed and feasted with fruit and simple fare. The country folk delighted in his splendid vigour and his manly love of sport; they did not want a scholar and a dilettante, like so many of the Medici. This boy was never at a loss, for in the summer time when other sport might fail, he would climb down the steep rocky side of the Trebbio to bathe and swim for hours with his young companions in the River Sieve—to the horror of the devoted Antonio Vaini, who wrote despairing letters to his guardians in Florence.

When he was persuaded to visit the city Giovanni only found life tolerable if he could have his fill of rough games, such as the *pallone*—played with a heavy oval ball, struck with the hand over the houses in the street—or the *palla al calcio*, a kind of violent football played in the big meadow just inside the Porta del Prato. Above all, the passion for fighting was in his blood and he never missed the opportunity of a hand-to-hand combat. The Salviati tried to restrain him by causing him to wear in Florence the good old citizen dress, without a cape or a “berretta”; but the boy simply folded his mantle like a noble’s cape and snatched a “berretta” from the head of a companion, before setting forth on some turbulent street adventure. He was in such deadly earnest that one day he struck too hard and swung his antagonist heavily into the gutter, where his head fell against a sharp stone. The unfortunate fellow, a big, clumsy town

boy named Pietro, never moved, and the other boys in alarm carried him to the Hospice close by. When Giovanni learnt that his opponent was dead he hurried in grief and dismay to the Salviati Palace. It was always there that he brought his troubles, and this was the most serious which had ever befallen him.

"Maria! Maria!" was his cry. "I have killed that big Pietro! It was in fair fight and by mischance he fell; but I know not what will come of it. Tell me what shall I do?"

"You poor Giovanni!" sobbed the young girl. "My father is away at the Civic Council, but I will call my mother."

When Madonna Lucrezia had heard the whole story she was quite as much distressed as her daughter.

"I would have given all my jewels that this should not have happened, my dear boy!" she said. "You have been too wild already, and Messire Soderini has threatened more than once to banish you; but your guardian has a voice in the affairs of the Republic and he will not fail you now."

"Shall I go before the Council and tell how it came about?" asked the boy, who was never wanting in courage.

"No, no, Giovanni, that would risk too much," pleaded the good lady. "You will be safer at the Villa Castello; and you had best ride off at once with your men, and abide there quietly until I send you word."

It was with a heavy heart that the boy took his leave, Maria's soft farewell ringing in his ears: "You will be ever in our thoughts, dear Giovanni, and we will pray for you!"

An anxious time followed, but in the end, Salviati, with much difficulty, obtained a mild sentence. The young prince was to be banished from Florence itself, but he might remain in his Villas of Castello and the Trebbio. Of course his companions and flatterers compared him to a hero of ancient days : “ He was like another Patroclus, the friend of Hercules, who was banished when young for killing another boy, so old Homeras saith.”

With all his passionate impulses there was a firm foundation of honour and loyalty in the lad, for when a certain flatterer said to him, “ Let them banish you now, Messire ! You will be Lord of Florence one day ! ” Giovanni impetuously drew his dagger and cried :

“ Never dare to suggest such treachery ! Do you think I would ever oppress my dear city, when all I ask is to protect her from her foes and destroy them ! ”

A rumour was spread abroad that the turbulent young Medici had been killed by a fall from his horse, and the good priest Fortunati was in great anxiety. But Salviati, his fellow guardian, soon set his mind at rest.

“ . . . Be of good cheer, our Giovanni is very much alive, and in the best of tempers. He has been with me to Pisa and Livorno ; he has seen something of the country round and has had a very good time. Believe me, he is like white wine, which needs much knocking about ! ”

So it seemed that the most dangerous adventures only gained extra holidays for this favoured child of fortune. The devoted Fortunati wrote him pages of good advice.

“ . . . You must not stay in Pisa when the cruel wintry weather comes, Giovanni ; I dread the cold rain and the snow for you. Come back to Castello, my son. I send you six ducats for your pleasures, but make Ser Jacobi keep an account of them. Yet you must not let people think you shabby or miserly ; I would have you free-handed and magnificent, as is suitable to your condition. . . .”

There was really no reason for this last counsel, as never did any one make his money fly more freely than Caterina's son. He so loved all the good things of life : horses, dogs, and falcons ; games, feasts, and jests ; and, alas ! the most disreputable company. Giovanni was at his best in his mountain home at Trebbio, with his violent out-door sports and his indefatigable pursuit of all that might fit him for the art of war. We are told that he would fence, night and day, with the tried old soldiers who had served the Madonna of Forli, and they never could succeed in wearing out his youthful energy. He became the most expert horseman of his day ; he studied the use of arms and of every means of siege and defence. When the mood took him, he would give the most extravagant village festivals, of which he himself was the life and soul—running, throwing the bar, besides jumping and wrestling with the villagers, who almost worshipped their gay young lord.

We find Jacopo Salviati writing of him at this time :

“ Giovanni may be wild and passionate but he has a good heart. We must have patience with him, my dear Fortunati, in this flower of his age, and

only use the bit with discretion to guide him as much as possible. . . .”

It was in September 1512 that an event took place which made a great change in the position of our hero. Eighteen years before, the Medici of the elder branch had been cast down from their high estate as rulers of Florence, and had been driven into exile. Now, by a series of intrigues which we have no space to describe, the men of Florence “once more returned to their ancient chains,” and humbled themselves before their former princes and tyrants. The triumphant partisans of the Medici could not forget that Jacopo Salviati had been a friend of Savonarola, the priest of Christian liberty and the foe of tyrants. They could not attack him openly, so high was his fame and reputation—moreover, his wife Lucrezia was the daughter of the Magnificent Lorenzo dei Medici—so Salviati was disposed of in the good old fashion: sent away as an ambassador to Rome.

Thus it came about that Giovanni paid his first visit to the Eternal City, for his guardian wished to keep in touch with him. By the return of his family to power, this boy had become an important personage: his banishment was at an end and all his shortcomings were blotted out.

There is a curious list, in the handwriting of Francesco Fortunati, of the magnificent equipment thought needful for the young prince on his journey to Rome. It is too long to copy in full, but we find:

“Two great Lombard coffers, of varnished black leather, cased with plated mounts.

“Six embroidered shirts, of fine linen, new. Six handkerchiefs with insertion, new. Ten handker-

chiefs of fine linen, worn. Two feather pillows covered with shot silk.

“ Ten pairs of shoes of fancy leather. A dagger with inlaid handle.

“ A doublet of satin, *al lucco*, new. A doublet of crimson velvet, new.

“ Doublets of grey satin, of black satin, and two of scarlet velvet, worn.

“ A great robe of crimson velvet, the collar lined with Spanish cat, new.

“ A great robe of black velvet, lined with fur, new. A surcoat of blue velvet lined with brown, new. A surcoat of black damask, lined with brown, new, and others.

“ A cape of violet cloth, lined with silver-grey damask, with a Spanish hood, and three others. A surcoat of silver-grey felt, striped with black damask, *for the water*.

“ A pair of Lucca shoes, new. A pair of embroidered black cloth shoes, new, and a pair of white cloth. A pair of velvet shoes, and a pair of morocco shoes. A pair of morocco boots. A pair of strong boots of calf.

“ A white beaver hat, new. A broad hat lined with black silk. A variety of caps, some of cloth of gold.”

Then follows an inventory of house linen, embroidered covers, hangings of silk and tapestry, arms and travelling equipments, all on a sumptuous scale, suitable for the young lord's high estate.

This boy of fourteen arrived in Rome on March 21, 1512, and lost no time in throwing himself headlong into the varied, exciting, and corrupt life of the great

city. His guardian soon had reason bitterly to regret having sent for him, and took the curious step of suggesting a visit to Naples, from whence, however, Giovanni soon returned and behaved worse than ever. Salviati wrote a long letter to old Fortunati, entering fully into his troubles, and concluding: "If there is no other remedy, I shall be obliged to send him back to Florence."

Fierce and turbulent alike in his love and his hate, the precocious lad was in serious danger, not only for his morals but even for his life, in the haunts of evil which made a byword of Papal Rome in the Renaissance. His two guardians had no peace until some months later, when he was safely back in Florence under the eye of his business-like cousin Pietro Francesco, who tried to interest him in the still unfinished division of their property. However, Giovanni managed to keep up a very gay life in his palace by the Corso, and we can still see one of the orders he scribbled to Fortunati at Castello:

"I pray you send by my man Toso, two couples of good capons, some thrushes if possible, ten flasks of wine and at least eight ducats, without fail. For you know a feast costs money. . . ."

At the carnival of 1513, when the Medici were having splendid festivities to keep the people of Florence in good temper, Giovanni writes again to the old priest:

"The Triumphs are going round to-night. Come, therefore, if you want to see them. . . ."

It was indeed a magnificent show, and we do not

wonder that the genial old canon enjoyed it almost as much as the boy of fifteen. They sat in state at the first-floor window of the Medici Palace in the Corso, gaily hung with banners and tapestry, while, again and again, the procession paused to cheer the gallant young prince of the reigning house. He had been behind the scenes, and could explain everything.

“Look, my father ; there goes the Triumph of the Diamond, and Messire Giuliano is at the head of it. You see they are all clad as Romans of the old days. The next one coming yonder is that of the Laurel Trunk, from which we Medici sprang, and it is led by our Messire Lorenzo. . . .”

As the gorgeous painted cars passed by, resplendent with gold and silver, with the shining armour, the torches, the wondrous line of strange animals, the boy clapped his hands and shouted with enthusiasm. But Fortunati was still more interested by the wonderful procession of the Age of Gold, in which the gods and heroes were represented. There was grim Saturn, and Janus with his two faces, and King Numa, Torquatus, the Cæsars, Cleopatra in a car with her ladies, and endless real and fabulous characters magnificently portrayed. One striking figure was a little boy, gilt all over, to represent the Golden Age, but this was a tragedy, for he died of it.

The memory of this gorgeous Triumph had not faded away before still greater glory awaited the House of Medici. Before the end of March the Cardinal Giovanni dei Medici became Pope under the name of Leo X. Madonna Lucrezia Salviati, his favourite sister, with her husband and family, were in Rome to take part in his Coronation, the most

splendid and triumphant which ever Pope had enjoyed. Our young Giovanni was present of course, and distinguished himself by the sumptuous magnificence of his costume and equipage, and by his incomparable horsemanship, which delighted the populace. He at once gained high favour with the Pope, who did not forget him, but in the general rush for good appointments other members of the family put in their first claim.

When Lorenzo returned to govern Florence in August, Salviati accompanied him, and also the boy Giovanni, who by that time was longing for his Tuscan villas. He had already written long before to Fortunati, or rather dictated a letter which he signed with a flourish like a plume of feathers and a few splashes like bullet marks.

“Most honoured and venerable father. . . . You tell me that you have my room ready and I am well pleased. . . . I long to see those fresh streams and also the ortolans. I pray you keep some for me and I will show you a new way of cooking them. . . . Give my respects to my dear lady Lucrezia and also to la Maria” (who were at Florence), “and tell them that I am well and I hope they are also. . . . God keep you.

“ROME, *June 11, 1513.*”

At length Giovanni's highest ambition was to be gratified: he received a post, at the same time as Pietro Salviati, in the armed militia of Giuliano dei Medici, now Captain-General of Rome. The lad began his training as a captain at once, and threw all the fierce energy of his nature into this profession of arms.

He aroused the greatest enthusiasm in his teachers, and his progress was watched with keen interest by the crafty Lorenzo. Madonna Lucrezia shows her satisfaction in a letter from Rome.

“ My loving son, salutation ! . . . I look upon you as one of my own children and will always treat you as such. . . . I hear every day how well you are behaving and that you are always with the Magnificent Lorenzo, which gives me great pleasure. . . . Believe me that I only seek what is good for your body and soul, therefore be of good courage and good will, for you are ever in my heart, but you must have patience, for time rules all things. . . . Keep in good health and good temper, and live wisely as I am sure you do and God will not forsake you. . . . Take care that your letters are delivered into my own hands. I recommend la Maria to you ; go and see her often.

“ She who is like a mother to you,

“ LUCREZIA SALVIATI DEI MEDICI.

“ ROME. *April 8, 1514.*”

Maria was by this time quite recognised as his future wife, and her position was no sinecure, for the boy brought all his troubles to her, talking ever of arms and armour and horses and fighting. He poured out to her his burning ambition to prove his metal in real fighting, to show off his hereditary valour and his splendid horsemanship on the field of battle.

Meanwhile, to pass the time until his military services should be in request, the young prince was taking an interest in the management of his estates and sending imperious commands to his stewards. Thus he writes to Antonio Vaini, in July 1514 :

“Messire Antonio, referring to your last letter, I see that you were to send me wine and various couples of fowls. You have not sent the fowls, I do not know why. Do not forget to send me four or five couples and as many more pigeons—in short a full load for a donkey, from Trebbio. Also I require a pan of lard and the rest of the flour. That is all for to-day.”

Giovanni went to his beloved Trebbio in the autumn for the hunting and shooting, and we find Fortunati, who was a decided epicure, writing to his dear boy to send him partridges and also fish of which he heard there was plenty. And in return he sent good pasties and cucumbers from Castello.

In October there came a message full of hope from Madonna Lucrezia. She sent word that Giovanni was to hold himself in readiness, for she believed there would soon be a post for him, and he must come, quick, quick to Rome. But he must not start until he should hear from her. And she signed her letter proudly,

“LUCREZIA SALVIATI, sister of our Serenissimo
Lord the Pope.”

CHAPTER IV

The Death of Giuliano dei Medici—Leo X. summons Giovanni to Rome
—His first taste of real war—Marriage of Giovanni dei Medici
with Maria Maddalena Romola Salviati—Giovanni wins fame
in the war against Urbino.

GIULIANO DEI MEDICI, the favourite brother of Pope Leo, who could not do enough for him—Giuliano the courtly Prince of the *Cortegiano*, Captain-General of the Church, Duc de Nemours, and recently married to Philiberte, Princess of Savoy—was slowly dying at Fiesole. As usual, poison was suspected; did not his nephew Lorenzo at Florence begrudge him the unbounded devotion of the Pope, who wished to make a sovereign prince of his gentle brother? In any case Giuliano's death was bitterly lamented by the young Giovanni, who had looked upon him as his leader to fame and conquest. All the service he could now render to his lord was to take part in the stately funeral procession, when the body of Giuliano was borne from the Convent of San Marco, the home of Fra Angelico and Savonarola, to his tomb in San Lorenzo.

In the midst of that princely company of mourners—where amongst the flaming torches and candles waved the flags which the dead man had never used on a field of battle—rode Giovanni dei Medici in a long black silk mantle, raising in his hands the great

banner of the Church, slowly down the Via Larga. The other standard was carried by Pietro Salviati, and these two young condottieri especially attracted the attention of the Florentine crowd.

Maria Salviati watched the splendid procession from the Medici Palace, with other great ladies of her family, and that evening Giovanni had thrilling news for her.

"I am to go to Rome in a fortnight, Maria," he cried. "Your mother has been a true prophet, and now His Holiness has sent for me."

"Then we shall be together, for now that my sister is better, I am to return there with my mother to-morrow. Tell me—will you stay with us?" she asked.

"No, my dear Maria; the Serenissimo has provided me with a palace of my own, and I am to take splendid furnishing there, suitable for a great household. You must advise me what to choose?"

"You will take back all the wonderful gold and silver plate which your mother brought from Rome, and the tapestry with the Riario arms, and those beautiful tapestry hangings with all the story of Abraham worked in silk and gold. . . ."

"Fortunati will see to all that; I will write to him to-morrow; but I must have rich clothes, and armour, and carpets, and linen for household use. . . . There is one splendid suit of silver armour, with a helmet and gauntlets all complete, which I would not leave behind on any account. You must think of all the fine things I shall need, for you see that I must make a good show in Rome to do honour to His Holiness."

"I will speak to my mother, and we will try to

remember everything," said Maria simply. "How proud we shall be of you, Giovanni! But all this will cost a fortune?"

"It is for my company that I want money," exclaimed the young warrior. "I have spent so much on them already, and now my captains must have embroidered gloves and armour and trappings for their horses. I must show you the splendid suit I have had made for my chestnut barb; with collar and breastplate and chamfret all complete. You see I only care for all this as it brings me nearer to real war! Think of it, Maria!"

She did think of it, poor girl, and though she bravely kept a smiling face, her great dark eyes grew dim and the colour faded from her cheeks as she realised that all this preparation would take her boy one day into the midst of terrible fighting, and battle, and wounds . . . and what would be the end of it?

So Giovanni went to Rome, and installed himself in magnificent style with a great household, and sunned himself in the favour of the luxurious Medici Pope. But little cared the young warrior about rare tapestries and sumptuous house linen; his whole heart was devoted to the training of his company and, with precocious wisdom, to winning the hearts of his captains. Nothing was too good for them; costly armour and apparel, horses of the best, even dogs and falcons for hunting. He was their fountain of honour rather than their master, and hereafter they would follow him to the death. It was at this time that the young condottiere made a special friend of a certain Corsican captain named Tristan, and that he first began to recruit his company from those brave

islanders who, with their solid courage and splendid endurance, were to become unconquerable under his marvellous training.

But all these military preparations were costly in the extreme, and although Leo X. was lavish with his promises, he was always short of money on account of his personal extravagance. Giovanni, who spared nothing for his soldiers, now began that fatal system of borrowing from the rich Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova, which was in time to devour all his fortune. His first real taste of war was a kind of border-raid upon the Orsini, under the Pope's orders, in which he showed his reckless valour ; and he was then sent to take possession of Sermonetta, that malarious place in the Pontine marshes, where he was again triumphantly successful.

More important service soon awaited him, for the Medici Pope, in emulation of Alexander VI., wished to make a "Cæsar Borgia" of his nephew Lorenzo, now that the more scrupulous Giuliano was dead. So with the instincts of a brigand, supported by all the wealth and power of the Church, Leo X. set himself to rob the Princes of the Romagna, and especially to conquer the dominions of Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino, for the profit of the weak and crafty Lorenzo. In the summer of 1516 the States of Urbino were invaded by the Papal forces from three quarters, in such overwhelming strength that the Duke, anxious to save his subjects from a hopeless struggle, bowed before the storm and yielded all but a few citadels, to await his time in the future. The war only lasted twenty-two days, but even in that short time Giovanni had learnt much, and served his first apprenticeship to the great

work of his life, as the supreme leader of his famous bands.

The young knight of eighteen had won his spurs, but he was being led into bad company in Rome, through his intimacy with the Illustrious Lorenzo, and it was thought well to carry out his long-arranged marriage before the next war should break forth. The Salviati had their time fully occupied between Florence and Rome, where their son Pietro was nominated Prior of the Eternal City. It was on a November day of this year, 1516, that the wedding ceremony took place between Giovanni dei Medici and Maria Maddalena Romola Salviati. The notaries on both sides had long been engaged with the terms of so great an alliance—Maria was to bring her husband a dowry of twenty thousand gold ducats, the same as her sister Elena received on becoming Princess of Piombino. Nothing was neglected in the way of money matters, for Madonna Lucrezia had all the business talent of her great merchant family. She was a brave, energetic woman, showing great talent and discretion in the management of her ten children; arranging princely marriages for them and, between times, obtaining a Cardinal's hat or a rich Priory for various sons.

When the great day arrived, all Florence was given up to festivity, for the high position and youth of the bride and bridegroom, both connected with the reigning family, gave additional interest to the splendid ceremony. At the corner of that gloomy street of the old town, the Via Pandolfino, stands the ancient church of San Procolo, enriched by the works of Giotto and Filippo Lippi, where the Salviati had their private chapel to the right of the high



Brogi, photo.

School of Vasari: Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

CATHERINE DEI MEDICI.

altar. Here it was that the handsome young Medici, his broad, sturdy figure richly arrayed, proudly led the slender Salviati maiden, of the delicate features, the tender mouth, and the great dreamy dark eyes which seemed already to forecast the tragedy of her passionate love.

After the wedding mass the procession set forth to the Salviati Palace in the Corso and, in stately magnificence, passed under the spacious colonnade recently decorated in the style of Michelozzi. The girl-bride of seventeen, in her stiff white brocade and pearls, sat between her father and mother, facing the bridegroom, at the great banquet given in their honour, and we are told that the guests were entertained by buffoons between the courses. But after the sumptuous repast they had to listen to a matrimonial sermon, in which the young married lovers were instructed in their duties. Next came the supreme moment when Giovanni gave the ring to Maria, and placed it on her finger, and she in turn presented him with one.

The wedding festivities lasted for some days, as the young warrior, in the joy of his heart, had prepared a splendid series of jousts and tournaments in honour of his lady. In these he gallantly distinguished himself above all his gay companions, by his consummate skill and unrivalled valour. In the enclosed space at the northern end of the lists was a raised daïs, hung with richly coloured hangings and filled with ladies in gala dress. In the place of honour sat the young bride who, in all that sea of waving plumage, glittering helmets, and tall lances, had eyes only for her hero. She watched him ride into the lists to the sound of trumpets, clad in shining

armour, his lance on the rest, and the great white panache on his helmet swaying in the wind, while her heart throbbed with pride to see the perfect mastery with which he guided his magnificent war-horse. But when the opposing knights closed in fierce conflict with a great shock, and lances burst into shivers and, amid the clash of arms, here and there a knight was hurled to the ground, then the gentle Maria—utterly modern and remote from her own period, in her horror of bloodshed—could only hold her breath and close her eyes.

In such a moment, she could realise with a bitter pang how far asunder she must ever be from the one she loved, the fierce young condottiere, to whom this mere semblance of war was a passionate delight. Dimly she foresaw that, to the end, she must hold the second place, for her Giovanni was indeed one of those who had “*tolto la corazza per moglie*” * (wedded the cuirass).

Jacopo Salviati gave his palace in the Corso to the young Medici, and it is curious to remember that it was built on the site of the old house of Folco Portinari, where Dante first saw his Beatrice. But there was nothing in the warlike spirit of Giovanni to recall the thoughts and aspirations of the poet. Not his the high and heavenly love described in the *Vita Nuova*; the poet's dream, the holy calm of that sacred vision were far beyond his conception. We cannot even imagine him turning over the leaves of that splendid copy of Dante's works on vellum, illustrated by Sandro Botticelli for his great kinsman Lorenzo.

* *Cortegiano*, I. xvii. p. 40, edit. Cian.

A fighter from his birth, his chief delight will ever be in waving banners, in glittering lances, and fleet war-horses; in the tumult of battle and the joy of conquest. Maria, of the tender dark eyes—those deep wells of passion—she will never hold him; for wife and home have no binding power to compare with his lust of war.

It needed but a little while to show how true this was. A passing illness kept him in Florence until the middle of December, but within a month of his wedding he left his young wife, not to meet her again for many a day. He is in Rome, eagerly engaged in training and making ready his company of a hundred light horsemen, who with their attendants made up eight hundred men. Francesco Maria, with the help of foreign mercenaries, was making a determined attempt to recover his dominions, and the campaign against him commenced at the beginning of the year 1517. Young Giovanni was so high in the Pope's esteem that his company of light horsemen was doubled in number, and he was also, for the first time, placed in command of five hundred foot-soldiers; moreover, he was first in the field. But before setting forth he received a letter from Maria, written on January 3. In the rare epistles which he sends to her, he addresses her simply as "Consorte Mia" (My wife), very unlike the elaborate ceremony with which his father wrote to Caterina Sforza: "Most Illustrious, and Most Excellent Lady, my only hope, most precious . . ."

Giovanni has news again of his wife at Bologna; he is told that she is well, "that she is working at a hood for a falcon, at a piece of tapestry, and that her sister Elena is with her." But his chief corre-

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spondence is with Fortunati, from whom he insists upon obtaining money at any price.

“My carissimo . . . I inform you of my good health. It has pleased the Signor Lorenzo to give me a goodly number of light horsemen. I therefore beg you to send me two hundred ducats at once. Do not fail me for anything . . . seeing that I want them immediately . . . even if I have to pawn my wife’s jewels; I am writing to her and feel sure she will do what you tell her. I pray of you not to fail me, and to settle this as quickly as possible. . . . May Christ keep you from harm.

“GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI

“(With his own hand).

“*January 13, 1517. IN THE CAMP AT BOLOGNA.*”

Poor little Maria! Here we have a glimpse at the kind of love letters she received. His next letter is to Duke Lorenzo, written in March, when he had to defend the pass in the Apennines at Fiorenzuola. “We are here on the watch,” he says. The war in those distant and rugged places was extremely costly, and even more so when he had to cross the mountains to Pesaro, where the gallant company was destitute of everything. The young captain writes to his faithful Fortunati:

“Reverend father . . . I send my servant Toso. . . . As is the way in war, these last days I have lost my mules with the few trifles which I brought from home. Tell them to send me a cape, a silk doublet and shirts, with all that you find in the house of mine. If they have been given away,

have others made. I have received from Madonna four shirts, but that is not enough ; see that more are sent.

“ And besides, as I am badly mounted, you must send me the best and finest Arab horses that you can get in Florence, for mine are all out of condition.

“ And besides, you will find a trumpet for my trumpeter ; it must be a good one with a clear sound. . . . You will also have a seal made with the crest and my name ; the letters small on one side, and larger on the other for the licenses and the safe-conducts. Nothing more to say. Take care to keep well, and commend me to my Lady, Madonna Maria.

“ YOUR GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI, as your son.

“ AT THE CAMP IN PESARO. *April 14, 1517.*”

Poor Fortunati did his best to obey the orders of his imperious young lord, but it became more and more difficult to borrow the needful money, and worse was to come. This war was no mere dress parade like the first attack upon Urbino, but a serious campaign which lasted eight months. The young Medici was the only leader who was in deadly earnest, eager to win success at any price ; he alone paid his men himself, and took no share of the booty which fell to him by right of custom. The other condottieri only thought of their own interests, and were by no means anxious to end a war which kept them and their companies so well.

Meantime Duke Lorenzo was glad to take advantage of a slight wound, to retire to the safety of his palace at Florence. He tried to keep command of the war from afar, while other favourites of the Pope,

especially Cardinal Bibbiena, were constantly interfering, to the furious indignation of a real soldier like Giovanni, who suffered more than once through their blunders, enduring the loss of his camp, his horses, and all his possessions, and barely escaping with his life. Even then, his most serious trouble was the failure of his well-laid plans. We see this in his violent complaints, although his passionate words have evidently been smoothed down by a courtly secretary. It was always the horses that the young leader thought of first, and these endless and unnecessary marches and counter-marches were utter destruction to them.

From Cesena he writes to Fortunati :

“Salutation ! I desire that you have made for me a silk banner with white and violet stripes ; and send it me as soon as possible ; as soon as it is ready give it to the bearer.

“I hear that my wife is ill. Comfort her for the love of me. If I could leave, I would go and see her. Make my excuses to her.”

He received the standard four days later, with a hundred gold ducats and a good Arab horse, but at the same time a letter from his faithful friend, who is in despair as to how he can raise or borrow any more money. He adds :

“Maria has had two attacks of tertian fever, and does not recover, and is very sad at heart. May God help her, for no one else tries to do so ! . . .

“Ever yours, F. F., priest of Cascina.”

Poor Maria might well fret herself into a fever

with anxiety about her young husband, always in peril of his life through his reckless daring. Daughter of a race of bankers, she might well moan with despair over his spendthrift waste of money in this terrible war, and the ever-growing mountain of debt which must bring ruin in the near future. For if Giovanni refused to pay himself with booty, he was also unlike the other Medici in not grasping rich offices and gifts from the Pope. The young condottiere was no courtier; we have seen in what terms he wrote about Cardinal Bibbiena, but worse was to come. When Duke Lorenzo had reluctantly put on the armour which Michelangelo had designed for him, and drawn near the seat of war, his young kinsman rushed into his presence at Orciano,* and thoroughly abused two captains who had interfered with him the day before at Sorbolungo.

“It is your fault, your negligence, or your cowardice, which lost us the chance of victory!” he cried, facing them with defiance.

In this war, which came to an end after eight months without satisfaction on either side, and where everything was on such a petty scale, Giovanni learnt his profession and grew to his full stature as a leader of soldiers. The aimless marches, the entangled skirmishes, taught him the value of rapidity, the secret of perfect discipline. He forged his own instruments, as all great men have done. He would replace the heavy cavalry, the cumbrous armour, the slow, massive horses which it required, by light, active Arab horses, easily managed and full of spirit, ridden by agile men lightly equipped. He formed

* Eighteen miles below Pisa.

for himself a staff of picked officers at a high pay, who were absolutely under his command, whose name and fame became one with his, and who were faithful to him alone, until his death. This careful cultivation of military talent was, in truth, the foundation of those famous bands with which his name is always associated.

Giovanni returned in triumph from the war, with his great banner waving proudly over the bridle-paths of Romagna and the highway of the Cæsars. He brought nothing back with him but the dawning rays of his coming greatness, and the whole-hearted devotion of his soldiers, who knew that their young leader was first in arms and valour above them all. Had they not seen him, in that famous skirmish with the hitherto unconquered Albanian, Andrea Gano, spring upon his foe, snatch from him his mighty battle-axe, and overthrow him in a moment? And that earlier time, when their hero had seized a prisoner in his arms and with one great leap had carried him off victoriously? What other leader, save Bayard, would have left the spoils of war to his men and taken nothing for himself?

In this futile and wasteful war, one deeper truth had been revealed to the warrior Medici, which is best set forth in the words of the historian Guicciardini.

“It was the misfortune of our destiny that Italy should be divided amongst so many princes and states, so that with their various interests . . . we are destined to perpetual misfortune.”

CHAPTER V

Evil news for Maria—In defence of one of his men, Giovanni has defied the Lord Camillo d' Appiano and slain two of his servants—Giovanni escapes to Castello and thence to Ferrara—Sentence of banishment from Florence for five years is passed upon him.

MARIA SALVIATI sat alone in the fair tapestried chamber of the Villa Castello. The tall gilt clock in the corner pointed to the hour of midnight, and a wood fire smouldered on the marble hearth, for in February the hours after sunset were still chilly. As the young Princess dei Medici leant forward in her carved high-backed chair, the light from the silver lamp on her writing-table shone full upon her face, and showed the ravages which anxiety and fever had made in little more than one brief year since her marriage. The ivory tint of her complexion had become a sickly pallor, her cheeks were thin and sunken, and there was almost a lurid flame in her great dark eyes. Still only a girl of eighteen, she had the look of a mature woman who had suffered much.

When that terrible war of Urbino had come to an end last autumn (1517), she had been full of hope and eager expectation. Her Giovanni would come back to her, and now would begin that blissful married life to which she had so long looked forward ! The ruinous expenses of the war would end ; now there would be money for the household expenses,

and to pay the mean, harassing debts to the poor farmers for their "corn, their wine, their firewood and their meat."

But how different had been the reality. Her husband assured her that he must continue to pay his best captains and the pick of his company at the risk of losing his high position, and that it was peace which was ruinous to him, when there was no chance of earning pay. The young Medici had thrown himself gaily into the life of a great lord; in his palace in Florence he had never less than fifty retainers, and kept more than thirty horses in his stables and as many dogs for hunting. There was constant feasting with his reckless companions, and all his fortune, her dowry, and all the money he could borrow, were melting away. And there was still worse, for the young wife had indeed cause for jealous indignation.

She had come across a letter, left carelessly in a doublet which he had asked her to mend, in which a person, who signed herself "Angelica," had implored the "Illustrious Lord Giovanni" to protect her from her enemies, who had tried more than once to set fire at night to the wooden windows of her house in Florence. Then, one day when Maria was attending Mass in her own church of San Procolo, a painted woman, with noisy attendants, had flaunted in and glanced at her with a contemptuous smile . . . and her maid had told her this was the notorious Angelica. . . .

But all these troubles had paled into insignificance before the last terrible rashness and insubordination of the young condottiere. On that inlaid table by her side was the copy of a challenge which he had

sent three months before to a kinsman, the Lord Camillo d'Appiano d'Aragona, cousin of Jacopo V., Prince of Piombino.

“ Lord Camillo. These latter days there arrived at Piombino a man who is in my service, called el Corsetto [the Little Corsican] . . . and he asked if you had any message for me. You made him wait ; then you gave him five or six wounds in your own house . . . and after that you call yourself a gentleman, when the greatest rascal in the world would not have done such a shameful thing. And in order to show you your error, I let you know that you behaved badly and ignobly like a vile man of the lowest rank . . . and I call upon you to meet me in arms and I will punish you for your sin. If you are an honourable man you will not fail in this, . . . though I doubt if you will dare to fight me. . . . I will send you word of a safe meeting place, suitable to people of our condition ; and if you do not accept battle, I will do what a poor fellow of your sort deserves. And let this suffice for you ; I give you a limit of fifteen days, dating from the day when you receive this letter.

“ Given November 25, 1517.

“ I, Giovanni dei Medici . . . and two witnesses.”

The duel appears to have been absolutely forbidden by the Duke Lorenzo and Jacopo V., Prince of Piombino, but Giovanni's blood was roused. He would listen to no remonstrances, and was driven nearly wild with all the delays and correspondence, especially as he had obtained safe-conducts for himself and his adversary from Luigi Gonzaga, Count of

Rodigo, who gave them permission to meet, under proper conditions of etiquette, at Gazzuolo (between the Mincio and the Pö, near Mantua), where he had a palace. We may imagine the feelings of poor Maria, who found herself in disgrace with all her relations on account of this impossible husband of hers, and was only too thankful to leave Florence and take refuge at the Villa Castello. The only person of any comfort to her was the priest Fortunati, who never blamed the young wife or urged her to worry the culprit into submission, but was full of wise sympathy, and assured her that "our Giovanni will work out his own salvation, and all will be right in the end."

But meantime Maria spent weary days and sleepless nights, and often sat up with her book or embroidery until the early hours of the morning. On that night of the 18th of February, 1518, she had risen to throw some fir-cones on the dying embers of the fire when she was startled by the distant sound of an approaching horseman. She could not mistake that familiar tramp of hoofs in the plane-tree avenue, and in another moment she had caught up the silver lamp and, with hurried steps, had passed into the outer hall, that she might show a light to the benighted traveller. She knew who was coming, for no one else would arrive at that hour and in such furious, desperate haste. Her throbbing heart told her that it was her Giovanni, and that he brought evil tidings. But Maria Salviati had learnt wisdom through suffering, and she gave way to no wild outcry as she unbarred the door with trembling hands.

In that moment of fearful suspense, the voice of

the master rang out to rouse the stable men, and she heard the sharp command :

“Pietro, bring round my new Arab in half an hour, and make ready to follow me through the night, with four trusty men.”

Then a breathless and travel-stained man hurled himself into the dimly lighted hall.

“I thought it was Fortunati who showed the light ! Why are you not asleep at this hour, Maria ? ” he asked, in a tone of annoyance, as he turned to close and carefully bolt the door.

“Tell me what has happened, my Giovanni ? ” she gasped, in ever-growing dismay, as she threw her arms round her husband and drew him towards the inner chamber.

“Give me wine and food ! ” was the imperious demand. “There is no time to lose ; they may be already at my heels ! ”

Maria obeyed in silence. She fetched a pasty and white bread from the buttery, and poured out a tankard of red wine from a silver beaker. Not until he was refreshed did she dare to ask :

“I implore you, Giovanni, hide nothing from me ! What is this new danger ? ”

“That coward Camillo will have to fight me now ! Listen, Maria ! The villain had the face to send two of his creatures into Florence to bear lying tales of me to my Lord Lorenzo. Before the assembled Council they called me a cut-throat, a boor, a misbegotten hound. . . . Judge if it was not past endurance ! So I went this night with il Corsetto to their lodging at the Albergo del Guanto, in that little street leading to the Arno, behind the Palazzo Vecchio. We found the wretches in an upper

chamber, and I gave them the lie in their throats and fought them. . . . Upon my soul, I scarcely know if I left them alive or dead . . . for my hand is heavy when I am roused. . . .”

He paused, and the only sound which broke the dreadful stillness was a stifled groan from the girl-wife, who had listened with open-mouthed horror.

“Cheer up, my good Maria! The slanderers only got their deserts. Our horses were waiting in the street below and we made a dash for the Porta San Gallo. The Duke had given orders that no one should leave the city, and had sent extra guards to support all the door-keepers; but you don’t think they could stop *me*? I knocked down the door-keeper and rode over Lorenzo’s bullies, and here I am!” He laughed with real enjoyment as the scene rose before him.

“But what will you do now?” Maria found breath to ask. “They will follow you, they will bring you to trial. . . .”

“Of course they will if they can catch me! I only hope my poor Corsetto is safe; I saw him through the gate, but lost him in the darkness. Now, Maria, listen! I go at once to the Strozzi at Ferrara, and write another challenge from thence to Camillo, which he cannot refuse in honour. You will send all that I need after me, for to-night we must ride light. Give me all the money you have in the house; and if that is not enough, you have some jewels left,” he added, with serene assurance that she would refuse him nothing.

It was not the moment to tell him that, except for a few gold pieces which the devoted Fortunati had lent her only yesterday, the great Medici lady

was quite destitute. She gave him all the gold, and added a few unconsidered trifles: a pair of diamond earrings, a sapphire pendant, and a ring or two. One painful duty remained; Giovanni felt that he must send an excuse to the Duke Lorenzo, and he wrote a brief letter, scribbled in haste, with big splashes for the letters and a signature like a plume of eagle's feathers. In this he solemnly protested that "his flight from Florence was only for the safeguard of his honour, for his arrest would have delayed the duel, which was more important to him than his life."

After his departure, a terrible time of anxiety and suspense began for Maria and Fortunati. Although the offender was a young sprig of the reigning house, it was felt that, for the honour of Florence, there must be some sort of trial and sentence for so bold an outrage. Both the Pope and Duke Lorenzo required that the young condottiere should own his fault and make submission to them before they would exert themselves in his favour; and in their help was his only hope. Fortunati and all the family tried to persuade him to be reasonable, and we can see why his poor wife wrote him the most imploring letters.

"Most illustrious and honoured husband," she dictated to the secretary Suasio; "... I have sent your letter and mine by Messire Francesco Fortunati to the Duke, who was pleased with them and showed them to Monsignore Cibo and my father, and he said: 'If Giovanni does his duty . . . I will not forsake him.' Therefore my Lord, I pray V. S.*

* Vostra Signoria.

to write at once to His Excellency and prove that your submission is in earnest and that you will obey him. Otherwise you may be certain that we shall be ruined and utterly hopeless. As I think of it my heart is breaking. . . . If I cannot trust you in this, I shall die of despair. . . . And if you do not send me comfort at once, I will go to a convent in my distress, never to leave it again. I pray and supplicate and abjure you not to hasten thus to your own destruction and mine at the same time.

“Now that there is a way of escape, I implore you to take it; do not wait for another opportunity which may never come. My heart is breaking; I do not know what will become of me. . . . Give some thought to our interests, for I promise you that they need it . . . and ever remember your distressed wife, who commends herself to you in tears.”

So much pressure was put upon Giovanni that at length he was induced to write a letter of submission to the Duke, dictated to him by Fortunati.

“Most Illustrious Prince, my only Lord; I hear that Your Excellency is going to France;* and as I desire to consecrate myself entirely to your service, I pray you most earnestly to suffer me to accompany you. . . . I also pray you to give me any punishment you think meet for the fault I have committed, although I must say that what I did was only to avenge myself for a great wrong. . . .

* To marry Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne, and to be Sponsor to the infant son of François I.



Anderson, photo.

Titian : Florence.

CARDINAL IPPOLITO DEI MEDICI.

I regret it from the bottom of my soul as I learn that Your Excellency was so deeply offended. . . .”

It was not at all likely that the subtle, crafty Duke, already in ill-health, would take such a fiery wild companion as young Giovanni, yet his letter gave great satisfaction. The Duke Lorenzo's mother, Madonna Alphonsina, was very fond of the young culprit, and she wrote to Maria, who had retired to the Convent of St. Ursula, “that she was not to distress herself, for all would be well.”

Giovanni was not likely to go wrong for want of good advice, as everybody loaded him with it, from the Pope downwards. A long and friendly letter arrived from Leo X. on February 26, in which Giovanni was commanded to come to Rome as soon as possible, and “the Pope would watch over him as a father.” Meantime the exile had been enjoying himself very much at Ferrara, where he was treated with princely hospitality, and had some splendid hunting in that country so full of game. Maria again wrote to urge him to obedience to the Pope, declaring that if he failed, “she would be tempted to kill herself with her own hands.” At the same time she asked “what was to be done with the dogs at Castello, for she was told they devoured three bushels of bread a day.”

At length Giovanni had made up his mind to go to Rome, by way of Siena. He wrote to have his swords sent to him; also a surcoat of black satin damask, which had been left with an usurer in pawn for a ducat, and his steel gauntlets.

It was on March 15 that his sentence was pronounced by the Council of Eight, after many weeks

of deliberation. Maria wrote to her husband a few days before to prepare him for it. She assured him that "the Duke loved him as a brother," and she threatened to become a nun in reality if he did not obey the sentence. His father-in-law wrote: "Do not lose heart; all this is done only to satisfy the public, and that we may be able to recall you better when the time comes." The sentence of banishment, written in the prolix maze of Law Latin, amounted to this: "That Giovanni dei Medici, having committed various misdemeanours, scandals, etc. . . . against right and justice . . . was to be banished from the City of Florence, and within ten miles of it, but he was to remain in the Florentine State . . . for the term of five years. . . ." A month of grace was allowed him before he had to announce his presence in the region set forth; but after that, disobedience would entail the loss of his head and of all his possessions.

In vain all his family tried to persuade him to accept these most lenient terms; he gave them as much trouble as possible, and declared that he was not well enough to travel. However, he wrote to Maria:

"CONSORTE MEA.—Your letter tells me that you are well; I am very glad to hear it. I beg you to send me two shirts and two tablecloths, and two cloths of doe-skin, and some of my sheets and a mattrass, and two salt-cellars and some cutlery, and at least six bowls, cups, and four dishes. That is all. I commend myself ever to you, and also to your father. Addio. March 19, 1518.

"Your husband,
"GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI."

At length there was great rejoicing because the young rebel had arrived, on May 4, within the limits, at his castle of Trebbio, twelve miles from Florence. In a letter of Fortunati of this period, we find a touching little postscript which reveals, in a curious way, the deepest feelings of Maria Maddalena Romola, the modern wife, full of nerves and passionate affection for her mediæval husband. She was out of her element in that stormy age of arms and fighting, ever distracted by rumours of murders and battles.

“P.S. May it please your Lordship to read this and keep it for your own eye. I cannot refrain from telling your Lordship of the words which his Maria has said to me . . . as I asked her why she was still so sad and unhappy. She replied :

“ ‘How can I take pleasure in anything when I see the life of my Giovanni always in peril ; when I never hear any one pass by or enter in, but the sound of footsteps is like a knife in my heart ? For I always imagine that bad news of him is coming to me. Why does he place his life in danger every day and night ? . . . Is any young man in the world more fortunate than he is ? Could any evil come to him but by his own fault ?

“ ‘My heart is ready to burst whenever I think that, if he had any children, even if they were not mine . . . I should not feel one third of this torture. For if adverse fortune came (from which God protect him !) what would happen ? Would there be any one to remember him and pray for his soul ? My heart is breaking when I think of it. . . .’

“ These words of Maria are of such importance, my Lord, that I dare not fail to repeat them to

you. May your Lordship read them again and again; all his future salvation, his peace, and his content, are contained therein."

Was Giovanni touched by this confession? In any case he had come back to Maria at the Trebbio, where he was out of the way of mischief and danger, and his thoughts were fully occupied with his outdoor pursuits. He set to work at placing his pack of hunting dogs on the best footing, and on renewing his falconry. By a stroke of genius it occurred to him to win the Pope's favourite—the chief falconer—by sending costly presents of perfectly trained falcons, and especially sparrow-hawks of a rare breed. This step was so successful and gave Leo X. such extreme pleasure, that before the end of June the young Medici had received the long-coveted permission to go back to Castello for a fortnight—which really meant for an indefinite time.

We next find Giovanni at Viterbo, with his half-brother, Bishop Ottaviano, for whose illegitimate daughter, Cornelia—to whom Caterina Sforza had been so kind—he had to supply a dowry. It was a new occupation for him to arrange a marriage, and we find him writing to Maria: "Look out three or four likely husbands in Florence, and then we will choose."

CHAPTER VI

Leo X. finds warlike employment for Giovanni—Birth of his son Cosimo—Great satisfaction of the Medici Pope—Giovanni in high favour at Rome—Letters of Maria to him—She makes sad complaint—His splendid training of his famous bands.

GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI was outgrowing, by slow degrees, his turbulent boyhood, but idleness was always fatal to him, and during that winter of 1518 he caused much anxiety to his august family by his dissipation and the lawless company he frequented. The Pope at length understood that the only way to keep him out of mischief was to find him military employment, and with war already looming in the distance, he appreciated the value of this young leader, who was one in a thousand. In March 1519, Giovanni was appointed to a company of one hundred men-at-arms. He had never disbanded his best captains and men, and he now devoted himself entirely to their thorough training. His reputation was steadily rising, and great nobles were anxious to send their sons to serve under him. He was known to have a violent temper, but his sense of justice and his marvellous intuition could always be trusted.

One day he saw a Corsican soldier out of his place in the ranks. He put his hand to his sword and the Corsican looked him steadily in the face. "Are you coming to me, my lord? If you approach, I kill you," he cried. Giovanni put his sword back

in the scabbard; this audacity fascinated him. He admired the fearless rebel who defied him, and put him at the head of a company, choosing him to serve near his own person. Such adventures made him very popular with his men.

The death of Duke Lorenzo, in April of this year, added much to the younger Medici's importance with Leo X. Lorenzo had carried out his visit to France with the utmost magnificence; he had married a French princess and stood sponsor to the dauphin, but all the time his terrible illness was increasing, and the following spring he died in agony, six days after the death of his wife, who had given birth to an infant, only too notorious in the days to come, as Catherine dei Medici. Another event of far more importance to the young condottiere was at hand, for two months after the death of the Duke, Maria gave birth to a son, on June 12, 1518, in the Medici Palace on the Corso in Florence. The letter in which Fortunati announced the news to Giovanni is still extant. It was written and sealed up the night before, and the servant Toso, who rode post-haste with it to Rome, was to fill up the details by word of mouth.

The great anxiety of Fortunati was to make the most of this propitious event, and if possible to induce "the Pope and all the Sacred College" to be sponsors for the precious boy! He gives a long list of great ladies who, according to the custom of the day, were in attendance upon Madonna Maria; he commends himself to His Holiness and to all the Salviati family, and urges his master to come as soon as possible to Florence as his wife desires to see him. "May God keep you in all happiness."

Giovanni probably never paused to read the letter through. It was enough that he had a son. He hurried off at once to the Pope, full of the wonderful news.

“Holy Father, I offer as a present to Your Holiness my first-born son. I have this instant heard of his birth.”

We can imagine the broad smile which spread over Pope Leo's heavy face. Here was another Medici!

“My son, I accept the gift, and the boy shall be to me as my own child. But one thing I insist upon: he must receive the name of his ancestor Cosimo, the wisest and best of his race. Send back at once the messenger who brought the news, and announce that I give your son this name. The sponsors will be the Cardinal dei Rossi, and the Lord Malatesta Baglioni. See that a rich reward is given to him who has brought the good news.”

Toso hurried back to Florence with the message, and received a suit of armour, two good horses, twenty-five crowns, a new suit, and was promoted to the rank of light horseman. Bonfires were lighted on all the hills around Trebbio when the tidings reached the peasants, and from thence the joy-fires blazed onwards all over Romagna, from one hill-top to another, till the flames spread from the Mugello to the Adriatic. The more distant and mysterious became the cause of this rejoicing, the more splendid was its outward expression.

Giovanni dei Medici was in no sense a family man, and he gave his wife and child very little of his company. While Maria watched over the cradle of the infant Cosimo, in her Florentine palace, and vainly hoped from day to day that she would be

summoned to join her husband, he thought only of his horses, of his equipment, and of the training of his bands amid the hills and valleys of Ancona and the ancient Osimo, until these rough soldiers became under his hands like an exquisitely polished weapon, ready for any emergency. At Rome he made his home in the great Salviati Palace, and had the Papal pages under his charge. He received occasional pay from Leo X., but was always in grievous want of money, as we see only too plainly from the letters of Maria, who had other grounds of complaint. She writes to him on November 12, 1519 :

“Most Illustrious Lord, most honoured husband ; I received a letter from you on the 4th, in which I heard of your good health, which gave me great pleasure. Cosimo and I are also well, thank God.” Then follows a long list of complaints and, at the same time, repeated assurances of her love ; and she adds : “I think you know that you have left me without money, or coin, or anything ; . . . all that you do is to ask for horses and I am to send you dogs . . . so that I have not a penny left. Here I want linen for sheets, as I have none left. . . . I cannot spin thread out of myself. I have sent you two vests, two doublets and a surcoat, with two sachets of perfumed roses for your bed. . . .

“I have nothing more to say only to commend myself to you, it is waste of time, I know . . . and as for little Cosimo I only wished you loved him more. . . . If there is anything I can do for you, tell me ; I would serve you much more than you would do for me ; it is that I love you so much more ; that is all my misfortune . . .”

Poor little foolish loving Maria ; such letters as this did her no good. But she was so young still, and so lonely in her deserted palace ! She adored him at the same time as she worried him—in these pages still blotted with her tears. But time would mend all this ; Giovanni would be tempered and strengthened by his great wars, and Maria would outlive this bitterness, in pride of her husband's splendid fame and in loving care of her growing boy.

The Pope found it greatly to his advantage to keep Giovanni in his pay, both to defend the Marches and the dominions of the Church, which were always being attacked by brigands, and also to keep the impetuous youth away from Florence, which was now in the weak hands of the Cardinal Giulio dei Medici (the future Clement VII.). This puerile weaver of intrigues had already made his government ridiculous and everybody discontented. Meantime, Giovanni was fully engaged in protecting passes and frontiers, in asserting his absolute rule over the towns, and above all in keeping watch and guard over the rocky castles of the petty lords of the Marches.

In this constant fighting, the young condottiere was troubled by no abstract sense of right or wrong ; he was in the service of the Pope, his kinsman, and all that concerned him was to carry out the commands of His Holiness and to conquer his enemies. With these bands, the number of soldiers was not too great to be always under the eye of their chief, but his constant difficulty was the pay, which was always in arrears. With any other leader, the men would have deserted, but they knew that he shared all that he had with them, and they remained

faithful to him under every trial. He had an intimate personal knowledge of each man, who could be quite sure that his valiant deeds—or the lack of them—would be justly weighed in the balance. Giovanni was quick to learn who were the brave men he could trust, and he promptly got rid of the others. One of his hardest contests was with Lodovico Uffreduci, the Tyrant of Fermo, and upon his utter defeat, the Pope promised his possessions to the victor. But Giovanni was destined to learn, by bitter experience, that there was no trust to be placed in the word of mitred priests or princes, for after many months of hope and negotiation he ultimately received six thousand ducats in the place of valuable estates ; and this was to cover all the expenses of his company as well as his own !

During all that summer of 1520, the young condottiere fought with desperate vigour ; pacified and fortified the unhealthy Marches ; was badly wounded and lost a finger of his right hand ; was laid up again and again with fever ; and varied his occupations with aggressive duels against the Orsini, tournaments at Mantua, and intrigues with the Roman Aspasia. He receives many letters from his Maria, tender and loving, and full of entreaties that he will come to Florence and see his Cosimo. She sends him a box of citron which she has candied herself, and she asks for permission to make a pilgrimage to Loreto, which he refuses, as she must stay at home to take care of the boy. Then he hears from Fortunati that his wife has been dangerously ill with a premature confinement, but she writes as soon as possible a pathetic little note to calm his anxiety.

“ Remember me, my very dear husband ; these

last days, by a sudden accident, I have found myself in such extremity that I never believed I should see you again; thank God that I am now out of danger. . . ." Her only wish is to do what he desires; and she ends with the humble request for a new cap with some gold trimming.

Unfortunately Giovanni was at this time in great want of money, and his father-in-law, Jacopo Salviati, who had already lent him three thousand eight hundred gold florins, definitely declared that he could advance no more. "He had lent a large sum to his son the Cardinal; he had married another son; there was the dowry of another daughter, Alvisi; and with other enormous expenses, he could do no more for the husband of Maria." Leo X. promised much, and declared his warm affection for his warrior Medici, but his own personal extravagance was so great that he had not much for others, and courtiers always came first.

During the latter months of 1520, little Cosimo was ill with fever at Trebbio, and made a slow recovery. His portraits as a child are charming, and seem to justify his mother's passionate admiration. She thought it wonderful that he could walk and talk at sixteen months old; and she speaks of him as becoming "more beautiful and more delightful every day." Who could ever have believed that he would grow into that evil, sensual-looking prince, Cosimo I., Grand Duke of Florence?

During the winter the Pope kept Giovanni in Rome, for he was constantly engaged in disputes with great Roman nobles, such as the Colonna, the Orsini, and the Caetani, and needed his own condottiere at hand. In a letter written by the secretary

Francesco Suasio to Maria, we learn how her husband was amusing himself in January 1521.

“Magnificent Lady, my most honoured mistress ; I commend myself to Your Excellency, and will tell you what happens. The Signor Giovanni is in very good health, and on Sunday evening he gave here a splendid repast to several Cardinals, Lords and gentlemen, amongst whom were the Cardinal Salviati and the Prior [Pietro Salviati]. And before the feast, there was a joust on horseback, which was indeed a fine sight. . . . And when the Holy Father heard of it, he commanded the Signor Giovanni to arrange another tournament in his presence. . . . My Lord was Captain of one camp, in which were six cavaliers on horseback, thoroughly armed with swords in their hands . . . and after dinner, in the combat on foot, there were twelve in each camp, with pikes and swords, artillery, trumpets, and drums ; the most splendid spectacle . . . so that all Rome is full of the highest praise of my Lord.

“You should have seen him behave like another Cæsar, so brilliantly did he fight, with blows of a paladin. And thank God, no one was hurt. . . .”

This last sentence must have given more satisfaction to the tender-hearted Maria than all the rest of the letter.

The Pope delighted in these tournaments, which were only a passing relaxation to Giovanni, who had far more serious work on hand in the incessant training of his bands. They were already becoming famous and, from all parts of Italy, came applications from young lords of noble families to be permitted

to serve as captains under this leader of three-and-twenty. Men and officers alike had to pass in review before the stern, piercing eyes of the master. Those who pleased him had to begin their trial—a contest with experienced trained men, according to the rules of the service. Admission to his ranks, and the amount of pay, both depended on this first joust. Then came exercises under the supervision of Giovanni himself—the handling of arms and various manœuvres on the field; while in order to rise to a higher grade, a soldier had to fight against the leader in person. Then he had to defeat an enemy in a duel on horseback and on foot; if he failed in these trials or showed any fear, he was dismissed at once.

He required of his men absolute obedience and discipline, in great matters and small. A duel was to be limited to the two principals, and was not to be carried on by “seconds.” To attack or insult one of his soldiers was to attack their chief, and he would risk his life at any time for their honour or safety. As we have seen, he could not do enough for his best captains; he loaded them with presents and gave them a full share of his hunting and other sports. As Giovanni was rising to his high position, he kept by him men of learning and letters to write his agreements and make treaties with princes.

The days were at hand when he would be called upon to prove the value of his companies in greater wars than the petty guerilla fighting in Romagna and the Marches of Ancona, where he had passed his apprenticeship. One great lesson he had learnt: that the heavy cumbersome armour of the Middle Ages, which needed massive horses, slow in their move-

ments, must be entirely superseded by light, agile horsemen, protected only by strong, simple cuirasses worn over a coat of mail, and by closely fitting iron caps upon the head, instead of the gorgeous and elaborate helmets still worn for tournaments. We see examples of this fighting armour in the bust of Giovanni by San Gallo, in the Bargello at Florence, and in his portrait by Titian. And we are told that when he unbuckled his steel guard over the left shoulder, after a day's fighting, the flattened balls would fall out in a shower round him, for he was always in the forefront of battle, and led the way where dangers were thickest—ever the first, the bravest, and the strongest of his men. Giovanni dei Medici was already called the "Condottiere of the Church," and he remained at Rome as much as possible during that last winter, when the intrigues of the Pope with his allies and his foes were slowly and surely paving the way for a great war.

Meantime the young warrior went hunting with Leo X. in the Magliana and at Viterbo, and as he followed the dogs and the hawks, he learnt much of the aims and motives of his companion. It is a surprise to find him writing a letter to the ever-faithful Fortunati, in which he sums up the new experience which he has gained of this inner life of priestly Roman intrigue.

"My priest, whom I honour as a father. . . . I must tell you that you are an old-fashioned man, too credulous and ready to take for certain that which is more doubtful than the flight of a bird in the air. . . . I should like to know on what you have founded your present belief . . . and the

hopes you give me. . . . Leave on one side, I pray you, my birth and divinations of any kind . . . and tell me plainly how these good things are to come to pass. . . . You must believe that at last I understand the ways and customs of the present day. All the same, I will not be bold or obstinate, and will change my mind if you show me, before long, the promotion and good fortune which you promised me. . . . How long I have hoped and waited for them, and up to this present time, only to my damnation and confusion. I do not believe that I have failed in my duty, and I will never fail, preferring that I should have reason to complain of others and of my ill fate, than that any one should have the right to complain of me."

He saw others, far inferior, preferred before him even in military matters. Guido Rangone is put at the head of the infantry, and the young Federico Gonzaga, Marchese of Mantua, is made Gonfaloniere (Captain-General) of the Church. . . . Still there was one success for him ; in the great Roman *palio*, his horse won the prize. And at this there were fine rejoicings amongst his friends. One writes: "The Pope laughed with his mouth stretching from ear to ear, so hearty was his enjoyment." "And there were fees and ducats for everybody—trumpeters, drummers, carpenters, banner-makers, and many others, for V. S. may understand that I did the right thing and spared nothing."

From the letters which he received at this time on the eve of the war, we see how Giovanni was looked upon as the head of his family, and with what vigilance he watched over it. Towards his

eldest sister, Bianca Riario, who had been an adopted mother to him in his precarious childhood, he always showed the warmest affection. She writes to thank him for his sympathy in her bereavement, for she had just lost her husband, Count Troile of San Secondo, and was left a widow with young sons, in the midst of terrible neighbours. Against these, the warlike Giovanni was to prove a strong defence in the coming years.

Then there was the illegitimate daughter of Ottaviano, Bishop of Viterbo, that young Cornelia to whom Caterina Sforza had been so kind. This young girl had been specially recommended to Giovanni by his mother, and we have seen how he helped to find a husband for her, not to mention providing a dowry. But she was an incessant beggar, never satisfied, and always finding some excuse to ask some provision for her children or fine clothes for herself ; while the young Medici's patience and generosity seemed untiring towards her. He was one of those who never forget a friend or forgive an enemy.



Anderson, photo.

Titian : Prado, Madrid.

EMPEROR CHARLES V.



CHAPTER VII

Family life in the mountain Castle of Trebbio—Giovanni most successful in guerilla warfare—He distinguishes himself greatly in the war of Urbino—His exploits—Death of Pope Leo X.—Giovanni takes service with the French king.

IN the early summer of 1521 there was granted to Maria Salviati the desire of her heart, but it turned to dust and ashes, like the Dead Sea fruits. Her beloved Giovanni joined her and little Cosimo at Trebbio, only to complete his final preparations before taking part in the war. Yet even at that exciting moment, he was strangely considerate and even tender to his wife and two-year-old son, for time had ripened and tempered his dominant tempestuous nature. There was something about his absolute sincerity and unselfishness of devotion to the great work of his life, which won all hearts. In those last precious days Maria ceased to blame him or to worry about her household cares; as she listened to his eager hopes and plans, she even tried to hide her distracting fears as, by his side, with fascinated gaze, she bent over the carefully drawn map of Lombardy, in which, like a true general, Giovanni was studying the scene of his coming battles.

Raimondi writes :

“ . . . I send you Lombardy drawn out, that V. S. may study it at leisure in your chamber . . .

although this map is not very correct. There are excellent ones printed at Venice but not at Florence."

That "universal spider," Leo. X., had at length openly joined the side of the young Emperor Charles V. against François I. Prospero Colonna, the imperial general, was already in the field, as were also the Marquess of Pescara and Marquess of Mantua, with their 20,000 foot soldiers, 1,200 men-at-arms, and 400 light horsemen. It was on July 7 that Giovanni dei Medici wrote from his castle of the Trebbio: "At length we are on the point of starting; this evening we shall be at Fiorenzuola, and to-morrow evening at Bologna." From here he was sent to Reggio, where he received his first letter from Francesco Guicciardini, who at that time was Governor of Bologna, and who knew what splendid work the young condottiere had already done in subduing those Marches.

"You will find it necessary, in these days, to try and remain on friendly terms with the inhabitants, that you may not leave a number of enemies behind you. Take heed therefore that where your soldiers are quartered, they may pay for what they have, and avoid all acts of violence—such as I heard that your men began last night. Do not only use force but prudence, and this I know you will certainly do. I only remind you of this in a brotherly way, not alone for the general good, but for your own private honour."

While Prospero Colonna marched upon Milan, and Pescara went to Genoa, Giovanni found himself still without pay for his soldiers (which may in part

excuse their violence), receiving contrary orders, and unable to do more than wait between Reggio and Bologna. But at length his opportunity came, for the passage of the French troops into the Duchy of Milan—after a fortnight's delay on the frontier—was considered a declaration of war, and Leo X. hurled his sentence of excommunication against François I. on September 4, 1521. Now began a series of skirmishes in that great plain of the Ghiaradda, where the trained valour and marvellous swiftness of Giovanni's bands won for him supreme honour; and especially in Florence and Rome, he was the hero of the campaign for his dauntless courage and unheard-of audacity. Some blamed the leader for thus constantly risking his life, but as his Secretary Suasio says: "You cannot at the same time remain in safety and acquire the reputation of a Hector."

We find him with his company of light horsemen at every post of danger, wherever honour is to be won at the point of the lance. He drove back the flower of the Venetians at Casalemaggiore, and on the banks of the Oglio; and on October 4 he took from them forty light horsemen, men-at-arms, and banners. But it was above all at the siege of Parma that he made his mark. The French and their allies were getting the worst of it, especially when Cardinal Giulio and Mathias Schinner, the fierce Cardinal of Sion, led a body of Swiss against Milan, and persuaded those Swiss who were in French pay, to desert—said to be some 16,000 men. The French general Lautrec began to lose heart and could not defend his strongholds, which were only protected by their natural defences, the Po, the Oglio, and the

Adda. It was at Vaprio that Giovanni performed one of his most gallant feats of arms, when, in order to turn the French Army, he threw himself in full armour into the Adda. He had learnt from his scouts that all the force of the enemy was centred near the bridge where the imperial army had to cross. Then he called two hundred of his picked light horsemen and said to them: "The moment has come when I shall test the courage of those who love me; let each of you take a foot-soldier up behind him and follow me."

He was riding that splendid white Arab horse, Sultan—who was to survive him and never suffer another rider—and he turned his head towards the rushing torrent; the noble animal leapt into the river and swam across, his master sitting firmly on the saddle with his lance at rest.

He had already given orders for all available boats to cross with his foot-soldiers farther on, and now his heroic example won the day, for Odet de Foix, unable to bar the passage, was driven back upon Milan. We do not wonder that Giovanni dei Medici's fame was in every mouth; "that he was exalted, praised, and adored"; and that in Rome he was promised "great possessions and an honourable post." This was the gallant paladin as we see him until the end; but our man of antique heroic valour always made the mistake of despising, like Bayard, these new arms—this artillery which made all men equal before its murderous guns, and which was to take a fatal revenge upon both these noblest of mediæval knights.

The life of Giovanni bristles with adventure. He can leave no famous warrior unchallenged; and

when, outside Parma, he meets lance to lance the great Gascon champion Carbone, he comes out victor in the combat and leaves his gigantic foe unhorsed and prostrate at his feet. But as his character ripens and his military genius attains its full height, the young condottiere becomes more merciful, in the spirit of true chivalry. When the pitiless Colonna would have hanged Cormo the Corsican, Giovanni pleads for his pardon, which is unwillingly granted. "To so valiant and reliable a captain as yourself, we must grant even unjust things," was the grudging reply.

In point of fact, Colonna and the other generals were jealous of this young Medici's splendid genius, which made his bands invincible and enabled him to perform such magnificent exploits. Thus he should have had the honour and glory of taking Milan, which his soldiers were the first to enter by the open flood-gates for the water drainage; but the story was hushed up by envious cardinals and great lords. He was too great for them, and eclipsed every one else. Who but Giovanni could have been the hero of the following exploit?

As the army was moving towards Pavia, he set forth with a small company to scour the country, and as he crossed that vast swampy plain, he suddenly met a body of the enemy's light horsemen. Of course a skirmish began at once, and the Corsicans of his band, although in smaller force, did so well that the others were driven back. Giovanni pursued them with such energy that he was far ahead of his followers, when his horse slipped into one of the numerous ditches which divide the water-logged prairie. The animal made desperate efforts, but sank deeper in the slime,

with his rider under him, when the flying enemy became aware of his evil case and returned to find Giovanni, in his heavy armour, struggling to free himself. In another moment he was surrounded, struck at on every side and hammered upon with battle-axes, while the air was full of cries that he should yield himself prisoner. With almost miraculous strength, the young knight freed himself from the weight of his horse and struggled to his feet. He seized his battle-axe in both hands "and the anvil became the hammer." He struck out so hard and with such splendid endurance that none could stand before him and presently, his men arriving on hearing the noise, he was rescued and replaced in the saddle. That night his armour was the show and trophy of the whole camp, for it was beaten in and bumped everywhere with sword-thrusts and battle-axes.

Only a few days before this, Giovanni dei Medici had heard from Fortunati, now promoted to be Apostolic Protonotary, that "the Pope was at La Magliana, with the Cardinal Salviati and all the Court; they were having a most pleasant time and all were well." On November 24, Leo X. had received the joyful news of the entry of his troops into Milan, and Baldassare Castiglione, who was with him at the time, writes :

"His Holiness said he was as much delighted as when he was made Pope; and on the way to Rome all the people came out to meet and congratulate him, the children with olive-branches in their hands. . . ."

The Pope was ill with fever, but he forgot every-

thing as good tidings came pouring in : first that Piacenza had fallen to his arms, and then that Parma also had surrendered—this last on the very day when the jovial, luxurious Pope was snatched away by death from his amusements and his intrigues. Was it poison or only the deadly fever of the Campagna ? remains one of the many unsolved problems of history.

His young kinsman, Giovanni dei Medici, had very little to thank him for but disappointed hopes and broken promises yet, in his eager loyalty, the captain of those famous bands changed their banners and their shoulder-belts from the white and purple beloved of the younger Medici, to the sombre black of mourning ; and henceforth he is known to fame as “ Giovanni delle Bande Nere.”

Leo X. was dead. He had grasped the good things of life with both hands, and to do this had borrowed to an incredible extent, spreading ruin amongst his friends ; he even owed eighty thousand ducats to his own nephew, Cardinal Salviati. He had pawned everything in the Papal treasury, even to the tiaras and mitres, so that “ never died Pope in worse repute.” Pasquino declared that “ Leo X. came to power like a fox, reigned like a lion, and died like a dog.” He was scarcely in his tomb before the princes of Romagna, who had been so cruelly wronged by him, asserted their rights successfully. Francesco Maria recovered Urbino, the Baglioni were reinstated in Perugia, and Sigismondo Varano in Camerino, while the smaller lords followed suit.

The pontifical army was disbanded, and Giovanni dei Medici returned to Rome with the Cardinal

Giuliano. But Maria Salviati strained every nerve to find the money her husband required for keeping the pick of his bands in his pay. The burning question for him and every one else was: Who would be the new Pope elected by the Conclave? It is not needful to repeat the well-known story of the extreme surprise which greeted the choice of Adrian, Cardinal of Tortosa, the Emperor's Viceroy in Spain, a pious old man, who most reluctantly accepted the greatness thrust upon him, and who was many months before he could even be persuaded to come to Rome.

There was no chance in all this for Giovanni dei Bande Nere, and he at length entered the service of Florence in January 1522, and collected his scattered companies. He was in sole command of the expedition against the Baglioni and the Montefeltro, in defence of the domains of the Church as well as those of Florence, and he greatly distinguished himself in sieges and skirmishes. But he gave the Council of Eight no peace, for he required foot-soldiers, relays of stradiots, couriers; he wanted everything, and at once. The fame of Giovanni and his bands spread on every side; Charles V. was most anxious to know him, and it is quite possible that he hoped to win him over to the imperial service. But with all these princes, there were so many intrigues and so many difficulties that an honest soldier like the young Medici scarcely knew what to believe. From Florence he could get no pay for his companies, and he writes in despair, when at Perugia, that "he could not keep his men, who were famished and destitute . . ."; but the Council of Eight continued to plead their poverty. Leo X. had

ruined Florence, and the Cardinal dei Medici still continued his exactions. It was absolutely necessary to pay the Swiss and the landsknechte or they would desert, and the Italians only came last, while there were even threats of reducing their stipend.

This was more than Giovanni delle Bande Nere could endure. Already he was driven nearly wild by the crafty intrigues of the Cardinal Giulio who ruled everything for the mild Pope Adrian, and whose weak and treacherous policy was destined to bring ruin upon all that he touched. Giovanni was becoming disgusted with all the useless marches and counter-marches, the endless skirmishes and sieges where he risked the lives of his men one day, only to learn on the morrow that some trumpery peace or treaty had undone all his work. He had saved Florence at a critical moment, only to find that the enemies of yesterday, the Duke of Urbino and the Baglioni, were now to receive important posts and to be placed above him on the Papal side, when it was he who had borne all the labour and peril of the fray. His men were the first care of this ideal condottiere, and it was for their sake that he took a desperate step.

On March 30, in the little town of Busseto, he announced at midnight to his soldiers that he had decided to join the French camp; he left his bands free to follow or leave him. We are not surprised to know that the greater number set forth with their beloved leader early next morning, and took the road to Cremona, where a bridge of boats awaited them. One of his best captains had been bribed by the Marquess of Mantua to leave him—Paolo Luzasco, who was accompanied by several

other gentlemen. But Giovanni proudly exclaimed :
 “ I will show that it is I who have made Luzasco, not he who has added to my fame ; they shall see that I will make other captains to equal him.”

He crossed the Po below Cremona, and Du Bellay thus tells of his coming :

“ To this place near Milan (sixteen miles distant), Cassano d’Adda, where our camp was lodged, there came to the service of the King, the Lord Giovanni dei Medici, kinsman of the late Pope Leo, who brought three thousand foot-soldiers and two hundred horsemen, whose ensigns were black because they wore mourning for the said Pope Leo. . . .”

Baldassare Castiglione wrote from Rome to the Marquess of Mantua :

“ The passing over of the Lord Giovanni dei Medici to the side of the French has caused much talk and displeasure. It is thought that a certain great person has seduced him by giving him to understand that he will be made ruler of Florence, and also that the Most Christian King will give him Imola and Forli.”

Giovanni was furious when he heard what was said about his accepting service under the King of France. He might be accused of anything else, but when he was spoken of as disloyal and failing in honour, he publicly gave the lie to his accusers.

“ By the trumpeter of the Sire Lautrec, I have heard that there are people who accuse me of a crime in joining the service of the Most Christian King,

because I was bound to the Sacred Majesty of Cæsar. I therefore make it known to every person who is my equal in rank, and who asserts that I have done wrong or that I had any obligation whatsoever, of faith or of pay, with the Majesty of Cæsar—that he has lied and lies as often as he says it, and will lie as many times as he repeats it; and this I will maintain with arms in my hand, every time that I have occasion to do so.

“Given at Misano, April 19, at the Royal Camp.

“Signed: GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI.

“(With his own hand.)”

In point of fact Giovanni was perfectly justified in taking service where he thought fit. But this was a disastrous moment for joining the French troops, who were under the command of the incapable and cruel Lautrec, and all the splendid courage and skill of Giovanni and his bands could not make up for the blunders and hopeless inefficiency of the French general. One town after another was lost, and he met with a crushing defeat at the Bicocca, near Milan, where he had yielded to the demand of the Swiss for “battle or pay.” The mercenaries who survived, retreated sulkily across the passes of the Alps, and the French were driven to retire from Lombardy, with nothing left to them save the citadels of Novara, Cremona, and Milan.

Giovanni had made a great stand for his men at Cremona, when he found that the city was to be given up by some intrigue, and Lescun, who was with him, had much difficulty in preventing a com-

plete revolt. The young Medici proudly told the French commander that he had just cause for offence.

“ . . . I cannot suffer this flagrant iniquity, to finish the war with clandestine agreements, which will disband my men at once without the pay which is due to them. As long as I live I will defend the cause of my soldiers ; I will not endure that they shall be deceived and cast out by any one in the world, and that they shall be sent off in utter destitution, clothed in rags and weakened with wounds. I place my true honour and my true glory in defending from injustice these most valiant soldiers, who have followed my fame. . . .”

This and much more he said, in such a terrible voice, that Lescun hastily collected all the money he could find, borrowed silver plate from the gentlemen in his camp, and distributed everything amongst the formidable Black Bands, who appear to have been satisfied for the moment.

When the campaign was over Giovanni had learnt his lesson ; he saw that there was as much cheating and dishonesty towards the condottieri in the service of the Most Christian King, as he had met with from the Holy Father, and had heard of under the standard of the “ Sacred Majesty of Cæsar.” For his part he had but one object in life : to be an honest merchant of great deeds ; to sell the splendid fighting capacity of his men, and to see that they were well paid. His business had terrible risks—for instance, peace was ruin to his bands. His life would probably be a short one, but if he survived,

he trusted to gain some little state where he would end his days on the footing of a real prince.

This was what Maria prayed for during the long months when she remained without news and without letters from her absent husband, constantly overshadowed by the dread of some sudden calamity. She wrote to him as often as the opportunity arrived.

“ . . . You see that if we send letters to each other it is finding a means to talk in absence . . . cut off from your dear intimacy, which is refused to me, what can I do but write to you ? ”

There is a letter of hers on May 18, written to the secretary, Francesco Albizzi, in which she asks for “ a dozen pairs of ladies’ gloves in calf, and they must be good and handsome ones ; quite different from those sent by Ser Bencio, which were bad and ugly, and gave me no satisfaction.” Poor lady ! She needed an outlet for her feelings in this way, now and then, when she found that she had not really a pair of decent gloves to wear, that last sign of refinement and distinction. Now that the French had retreated from Italy, her one hope was for the return of her warrior husband, but she had to wait for awhile.

In the summer of that year, 1522, Giovanni found leisure to attend to the affairs of his sister Bianca and to repay her, in princely fashion, for her devotion to him as a child. This is the story as it is given by a son of hers, Giovanni Geronimo, who became Bishop of Pavia.

“ Bianca, the sister of Giovanni dei Medici,

had been left a widow with many children, and was seriously molested by the behaviour of her kinsman Bernardo dei Rossi, who was in high favour with Pope Leo. While the army was near Parma, His Holiness had decided that the estates which she possessed in that neighbourhood should be taken from her. But when the Signor Giovanni heard of this resolution, he took possession on her behalf of all the castles which belonged to her, saying: 'I should like to see who will come and take them from me!' And when he was himself at San Secondo,* a strong fortress with good rents belonging to it, his Corsican Geronimo said to him: 'My lord, you are poor and have nothing; why do you not keep these castles for yourself, and send your sister home?' 'Never speak to me again like this, if you value your life!' was the stern reply. 'I care for my sister and my nephews more than anything else in the world. If I live, I shall not want for castles like this and greater still!'"

This kind of guerilla war found some occupation for his men, while he was in negotiation with the French and the Papal authorities. On June 3 he arrived at San Secondo with two thousand men, and sent word to Guicciardini, the Governor of Parma, that he only wished to help his sister. He seized the artillery of Filippo dei Rossi, who was supporting the Bishop of Treviso, and then he passed onwards along the banks of the river Toro and through the ravines of the Cervellino to the little town of Berceto †

* North-west of Parma, between the Taro and the Po.

† Near Fornovo.

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on the slopes of the Apennines. Before the middle of June, Giovanni had taken from the Count Filippo dei Rossi the strong castle of Brissaga, and henceforth Bianca and her sons could enjoy their possessions in peace.

CHAPTER VIII

Letter from Maria—Time of peace, in which Giovanni looks after his estates—Pope Adrian VI.—Giovanni at Aulla in the Lunigiano—An unwelcome neighbour—The Medici Pope Clement VII. elected—Maria seeks his favour for her husband and son—Giovanni returns to the imperial and Papal side in the following war.

THE summer of 1522 was already far advanced, and Maria Salviati was still awaiting the coming of her husband in his favourite castle of the Trebbio. She had recently sent this letter to him at Bologna, where he was engaged in buying corn and arranging affairs concerning his estates with his new bailiff Suasio :

“ . . . Every one, Cosimo and all the household, are all quite well,” she wrote with her own hand. “ His Excellency the Marquess of Mantua, as he was posting towards Florence, deigned to pay me a visit here with Messire Paolo Luzasco, in order that he might embrace Cosimo ; he could not make enough of him, which I thought very amiable and charming of him. We received him with all suitable welcome, yet he would not consent to lodge here. His coming was pleasant to me ; that of your Lordship will be extremely pleasant to me ; may God grant that it may be soon and that you will arrive in health and good fortune.

“ At the Trebbio, August 19, 1522.

“ Your good ‘ CONSORTE.’ ”



Brogi, photo.

Vasari: Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

MARIA SALVIATI, WIFE OF GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE.

Maria gives a cheerful account of this flying visit, which must have been an anxious and trying time for her. It was impossible for the wife of the captain who had lately been fighting against the young marquess to feel otherwise than doubtful of his real feelings, while as to Luzasco, who had thrown off all allegiance to the master who had trained him, she felt very bitter in her heart against him. But now, as she looked forth from her tower chamber towards the winding mountain road which led from Bologna, and strained her eyes across the rugged Mugello, she saw another cavalcade approaching, and by the black banners she knew that her condottiere was close at hand. We can picture to ourselves Maria's eager joy, and her wistful anxiety that little Cosimo should appear at his best after his father's long absence, as they hastened down to the great entrance gate to meet him.

The tender mother must have remembered that other day, two years before, when Giovanni returned to the Palazzo in the Corso at Florence, with his warlike escort and the same tramp of horses' hoofs and blowing of trumpets. He had looked up at the window where the nurse held the child, and had cried, in tones which resounded through the narrow street: "Throw him down to me!" while he smiled with encouragement and love at his little son.

The woman dared not obey, the window was so high. "Throw him down to me, I command you!" roared the voice of the man who had never brooked resistance.

Then the poor nurse had closed her eyes, dropped the boy, and in another moment, Cosimo was caught in his father's outstretched arms and clasped against

the steel cuirass. The child had neither screamed nor struggled, and Giovanni, proud of such fearlessness, stooped down to kiss him, and murmured: "You shall be a prince; that will be your fate."

Giovanni delle Bande Nere had come back to Trebbio in a new character, for during those autumn months of 1522, we find him living like a country gentleman, looking after his estates, taking possession of all the account-books, seeing to the management of everything, calculating the harvests and the returns. He saw the corn gathered in and took part in the vintage; he taught little Cosimo—now a boy of three—to ride his pony, and the heart of Maria rejoiced to hear once more the horn of the huntsmen and the barking of dogs, ringing through the rough valleys of the long silent Mugello. We find the famous condottiere apparently satisfied by this peaceful home life with his wife and child, but it was impossible that this could last long.

After all, he was a general out of work, and this interval of peace was ruin to the Black Bands. At the opening of the new year he was quite ready to go to Florence, where Cardinal Giulio wanted him at hand, to keep in check the many enemies he had made by his weak and vacillating intrigues. Then came the plague, and Giovanni went to Rome with Maria and Cosimo. He had met with nothing but deception and disappointment on every side, but he was still carrying on negotiations with François I., who had promised him Imola and Forlì, and with Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, who was anxious to obtain his services. As soon as the spring came, he sent his wife and child back to Trebbio, where the air was purer, as there was always danger of the

plague breaking out again in the Eternal City, which it had ravaged the previous autumn. He himself went to Reggio, where the greater part of his bands had wintered, and in their constant training and exercising, he had at least the illusion of war, and he would be ready for the first chance of active service.

Guicciardini had returned as Governor, to the great satisfaction of the people of Reggio and the neighbourhood, who had suffered much from the presence of the bands, although Giovanni would not allow any insubordination when he was with them. A period of peace was never good for this young Medici; he was surrounded with gay companions, and, we are told, lived in great extravagance and "freedom of morals." Maria is asked to send him rich satin, fine linen, and other costly items; but she replies, at her wits' end: "I have none to send you, as I have already told Pietro; when I am richer, I shall be able to help you better."

We hear much of the festivities at Reggio, when Giovanni's niece—Angela dei Rossi, the daughter of Bianca, who was about to marry Vitello Vitelli—passed through the town on her way to the citadel of the Vitelli, at Città di Castello. The young leader of the Black Bands feasted the whole town, and received the Lady Angela with splendid entertainments; while there were jousts and tournaments on foot and on horseback for many days, amongst his soldiers in her honour.

"My lord, is all this for your niece or for your lordship?" asked a friend one day. Giovanni burst out laughing, and replied: "In truth the niece is the first cause of it, but perhaps you are right about the second cause!"

Giovanni was not so much absorbed in his profession as not to be very human in every way. He delighted in feasts and amusements of every kind, and above all in merry and witty companions. He was a man who could not endure solitude at any time, and in this year, 1523, he renewed his acquaintance with the talented, notorious Pietro Aretino, who remained, till the end, his closest and most intimate friend. Aretino was one of those clever satirists—I might almost say buffoons—who had been in such high honour at the Court of Leo X. They were often usefully employed as ambassadors between princes, for a suggestion might at times be made in jest, which no one would venture to put formally. Aretino, under the disguise of Pasquino,* had said so many witty things in ridicule of the newly appointed Pope Adrian, that he had to take refuge with Cardinal Giulio at Florence before the good old Pope actually arrived in Rome. Adrian was so indignant at the biting remarks of Pasquino that he wanted to throw the old torso into the Tiber, but he was told that it was useless to try and drown him, for, “like a frog, he would talk out of the water.”

We are not told whether Aretino arrived at Reggio in time to take part in that wild adventure of young Medici when he rode through the pottery market, with his huntsmen and his pack of hounds, smashing up everything like a barbarian, and paying for the broken pots and pans like a prince. In any case the clever man of letters was able to help him in a lawsuit which he was carrying on in connection

* A mutilated statue in Rome, on whose pedestal were posted witty criticisms of passing events.

with Aulla, a citadel which he had bought for himself when he was fighting to help his sister Bianca in the Lunigiana. It is a great feudal stronghold, perched up on a rocky height in the Ligurian Apennines, and he had been attracted by the wild beauty of the spot, where the torrents of the Taro and the Magra join that of Aulla ; and also because of the strong position of this castle, the key of a valley which leads from the Mediterranean coast to the defiles of Tuscany.

It is not at all surprising that all the neighbouring chieftains were up in arms at the prospect of having the redoubtable Giovanni delle Bande Nere established in their midst. This was more especially the case with the Malespini, who had formerly been lords of Aulla ; and, besides harassing him perpetually, they brought a lawsuit against him in the court of Pisa, disputing his title deeds. The Duke of Ferrara felt uneasy about the Garfagnana, and Genoa was anxious about Sarzana, with Giovanni so near at hand ; and the Sire of Monaco, Grimaldi—a Corsair by descent and custom—pillaged the boats which the Black Bands used to reach the sea—taking the short way, only twelve miles by river, instead of the long mountain road. Giovanni challenged the Grimaldi, but Cardinal Giulio managed to avert a duel ; however, the young condottiere had his fill of fighting with most of his neighbours, who had to pay big ransoms ; while the rocky fortress of Aulla was always a handy refuge for the Black Bands.

It was about the time of Aretino's coming to Giovanni that we first hear of Luca Antonio Cuppano, who had been the personal attendant of his master, and had then been trained in the famous bands,

where he so greatly distinguished himself that he became a great favourite. However, he still had other duties besides fighting, as we see in a letter to him from Maria Salviati.

" . . . I remind Messire Luca Antonio that I want first, two large fans and half a dozen boxes of civet ; and have two gold caps made for me of the kind used in Mantua, and four pairs of dark tan-coloured cuffs, of the kind worn at Reggio. And if you do not know how to buy the lining for the cuffs, ask Signora Camilla, who will be able to tell you. . . . I want also two hoods of brown silk in the Reggio fashion, and if you have good amber, send me some . . . and some musk. Send me these things as soon as you can, when you have money, and commend me to the Master. That is all. May God keep you from harm.

" *July 15, 1523.*

" Buy a poignard for Cosimo.

" P.S." (pinned on to the letter). " Have made for me a gold chain for Cosimo of 4 or 5 ducats, and a gold medal for Cosimo. You will have all this made as soon as you have any money ; that is all.

" MARIA SALVIATI DEI MEDICI."

It is satisfactory to know that the precious little prince received his poignard, his chain, and the gold medal for his cap. When Maria wrote this letter, she and the boy were away at a farmhouse in the mountains, " in search of coolness," for that summer was intensely hot and very unhealthy. The great lady could not do her own shopping in the mountains, but she evidently trusts that the scents and other

things she asks for will be sent “when there is money.” News must certainly have reached her of Giovanni’s extravagant living at Reggio—where he remained during those sultry months—when he was not engaged in his lawsuit, his incessant contests, and a fresh difficulty which had arisen about the estates of Uffreducci, so grudgingly bestowed on him by Pope Leo, and of which the gift was now disputed by the Apostolic Chamber.

But all personal matters were soon forgotten in the rumours from beyond the Alps of coming war. Once more the fatal mirage of conquest in Italy was to lead the French King, like a will-o’-the-wisp, to invasion and disaster. The league formed against him was very powerful. The imperial army, supported by the peace-loving Pope Adrian, almost all the states of Italy, including Milan under Francesco Sforza, and the fleet of Genoa; also the King of England and the Archduke Ferdinand. At the head of the league was the old general Prospero Colonna, long past his prime.

Giovanni delle Bande Nere returned to the imperial side, in the service of Francesco Duke of Milan, by whom the contract signed is still in existence, dated August 26, 1523, at Trezzo on the Adda, where the Duke had gone to escape the plague at Milan. Giovanni was to have under him a company of 200 men-at-arms, about 300 light horsemen with the 1,200 attendant soldiers, and 2,000 foot-soldiers; and he specially insists on his band of twenty-five chosen and highly paid captains, in immediate attendance upon himself. But all the important posts in the imperial army were given to inferior leaders, and the best soldier amongst them all was not satisfied.

“ You have served me badly in this contract,” he said to those who had drawn it up. He was constantly harassed by the Malespina ; he wanted money at once for his artillery and his horses—those light Arabs who were so essential to him. He writes to his bailiff Suasio :

“ . . . Search all over the castle at the Trebbio, under the beds and everywhere, and also in the arsenal, and see if there are not several great pieces of artillery, short ones in bronze and metal ; look for them well . . . and if you do not find them there, seek for them at Florence and at Castello, everywhere, all you can find, and send them to me at once by express. Do not fail.

“ REGGIO, *August 20, 1523.*”

The ardent condottiere rides incessantly over those burning roads of Lombardy, from Milan to Reggio, scouring the country for men ; and the tertian fever attacks him, again and again, as he rides post-haste, night and day, without drawing rein. His great care is always for the pay of his men, which he attempts to make “ fixed and certain,” that they may never be in want or distress.

The French Army, which had climbed the passes of the Alps, was commanded by Bonnivet, and consisted of 1,500 of those famous men-at-arms and 25,000 foot-soldiers—French, Italian, Flemish, and, above all, Swiss, under their leader Jean de Diesbach. Bayard fought in the French Army with his friend Jean de Chabannes and, amongst other famous captains, Renzo da Ceri, who had recently distinguished himself in the victorious defence of

Marseilles. On the very day when Bonnivet crossed the Ticino, Pope Adrian VI. died, broken-hearted at his failure to reform the Church and to join all Christian princes in a crusade against the Turks, instead of this suicidal war. Poor man! "He thought nothing more unfortunate in his life" than his high dignity, and he was hated in Rome for his very virtues. After a Conclave of fifty days another Medici was to be elected—the Cardinal Giulio—henceforth the crafty and treacherous Clement VII.

But much was to happen first. His young kinsman, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, was to add to his fame until he and his bands were always placed in the forefront of danger, and became the mainstay of the imperial army. While the French troops closely besieged Milan, provisions were desperately needed in the city; Giovanni made a sortie, and was attacked by a company of the unrivalled French men-at-arms. First he harassed them, then feigned a retreat and drew them into an ambush, where they were all taken or killed. "He never rests, that gallant man!" says a Venetian captain. In fact, he almost supported alone the terrible burden of that devastating siege, where famine always stared the defenders in the face, the water-mills were destroyed, and the only hope was in the successful sorties and brilliant skirmishes of the Black Bands. Prospero Colonna was dying, treachery had more than once to be put down with a fierce hand, and at length all the useless mouths had to be turned out of Milan. Fortunately for the imperial cause, the French Army suffered greatly from the snows and the cold damp of those Lombard plains, and began to retire across the Ticino—just at the time of the great

triumph of the Medici in the election of Clement VII. on November 14.

Whilst Giovanni fought and suffered in the army of the Church, always in deadly peril, and too often on the brink of starvation, his wife Maria appears to have been suddenly aroused to a keen sense of the position. The news spread like wildfire that a Medici once more sat on the Chair of St. Peter, and Florence was wild with rejoicing. While the bonfires flamed and the church bells rang out peals of gladness, the devoted Fortunati held deep counsel in the Palace on the Corso with his noble lady.

"We must lose no time, Madonna," he cried. "Already the race for place and preferment has begun. Ridolfi has applied for the Archbishopric of Florence; your brother Giovanni will go as Legate to Bologna; the Riario brothers are claiming help; and the two Medici bastards, Ippolito and Alessandro, have arrived in Rome."

Maria needed no spur to action. Her passionate love as a wife and a mother had already kindled in her an eager subtle intelligence with regard to their interests.

"I understand; I see it all, my father," she replied. "We have been patient too long, and Giovanni thinks of nothing but his soldiers and his fighting. Remember Pope Leo, who promised us so much and did so little. If he had only lived longer, he might have done more . . . but we will run no risk this time, that I swear! You and I will write a letter to this Pope Clement, and he shall know what we expect of him!"

The long-suffering Maria was roused indeed, and the broad, genial face of the old priest beamed with

delight, for his pupil had outrun him in her enthusiasm. He got ready pen and paper and sat down to write at her dictation the famous letter which bears witness to this day of her new energy and determination.

“Gesù Maria.

“Most Holy Father, and your Most Clement Highness. I am quite certain that by the favour of Your Holiness I shall be less exposed to my usual difficulties . . . but the longer I wait, the more trouble Your Holiness may have. In consequence, with humble respect I entreat that you will condescend to free my Lord and husband from the many debts and engagements by which he is at present overwhelmed ; in order that they may not devour entirely the little which is left to him. For unless Your Holiness interferes, there is no means by which he can be set free. Thus I devoutly implore Your Holiness will take it in hand ; being well assured that the means of delivering my husband will not fail You, without much trouble and inconvenience—either by means of the salt duties or the customs, or by any other way which You may prefer. And I shall be never weary of praying God for your salvation, remaining for ever Your slave, with my dear son. At the most holy feet of Whom, I very humbly commend myself.

“FLORENCE, *December 5, 1523.*

“Of Your Holiness the slave and the daughter,
“MARIA SALVIATI DEI MEDICI.”

This was only the first move in the game which the determined young princess was to carry on with

so much success in later years. But her chief difficulty was to induce her husband, the honest and outspoken soldier, to take his part. She wrote him a letter for the New Year in which she implored him "not to go to sleep over all those affairs over there, when the important matter was to win the favour of the new Pope"; and she added that she believed "he was kept at the seat of war that he might be out of the way." . . . "In the days of Pope Leo, every villain had something . . . only we were left out!"

We can imagine Giovanni receiving this letter in the besieged city of Milan, when his soul was entirely filled with sorties and skirmishes, when he was the most trusted general of Duke Francesco, and when the great Charles de Bourbon was sending him admiring letters, offering his support and friendship. Yet he became really interested in the matter, when he heard, a little later, that Maria's bold move had been successful. Clement VII. was most gracious; he sent little Cosimo twenty ducats for a pony early in January; then a present of two hundred ducats for Maria herself in March; and four ducats more for a gallant equipment of Cosimo's pony. All this was so encouraging that Madonna was persuaded by Fortunati to push her advantage still farther, and she decided to take her little prince to Rome, that he might be kept well in sight, that he might grow in the Pope's favour and receive a settled position worthy of his rank and near kinship to the priestly giver of good things.

CHAPTER IX

Maria Salviati at Rome—She and Cosimo in high favour with Clement VII.—Giovanni greatly distinguishes himself against the French, who retreat over the Alps—Peace is fatal to the Black Bands and to their condottieri—Pietro Aretino joins Giovanni—François I. invades Italy.

It was a moment of triumph for Maria Salviati, when at length all her preparations were made and the day was fixed for her journey to Rome. This important move had been encouraged by all her friends, and more especially by the Pope himself, who had graciously promised that when the Lord Giovanni could return from the wars, he should receive there a beautiful palace, at present occupied by the Portuguese Ambassador.

It was in the midst of a violent storm of rain and wind that the Medici princess, with her little son Cosimo and an escort of twenty cavaliers, amongst whom rode the good priest Fortunati—who had with difficulty been persuaded to join them—at length reached Rome on the evening of February 27. The weary travellers were received with the warmest welcome at the palace of the Salviati, where they were to take up their abode. Jacopo and Lucrezia Salviati could not make enough of their daughter and grandson, and the family circle was made complete by the Cardinal Giovanni and the Priors Pietro and Bernardo, all radiant with delight at seeing

the triple crown once more on the brow of a Medici. Surely now the good times would come, and they would all bask in the sunshine of prosperity !

In the familiar atmosphere of home affection, and under the care of the honourable and important Salviati, beloved of Popes, and of her mother Lucrezia—who had made so brave a fight for the advancement of all her children—Maria would have a comforting sense of rest and peace, such as she had not known for years. They would prove a strong tower of help, and all would be well. It was a most happy omen that the very next day Pope Clement sent for little Cosimo, and the handsome prince of four years old won golden opinions, and was “much caressed by His Holiness.” Maria was invited to an audience at the Vatican on the morrow, and, like a warrior preparing for battle, she set herself to read once more the letter which she had received from her husband at the moment of leaving Florence.

“CARISSIMA CONSORTE,—

“Although the horse I was sending you has unfortunately gone lame, do not let that interfere with your journey to Rome, which I much desire. . . . I am glad you will be at your Salviati Palace.

“When you have arrived in Rome, go as soon as you can to the feet of His Holiness, and according to the words which occur to you at the moment, you will commend me to His Holiness ; you will make him understand what you know of my condition, and how I have been, and still am, in the service of the Lord Duke, and in this enterprise at the expense of His Holiness ; also that I am not a man to fail in

doing all that is possible for the honour of our house. Truly, I am overwhelmed with expenses, and have been badly paid for a long time : as His Holiness well knows for I have complained many times by letter. I know well that Our Lord does think of my affairs, present and to come, and that he has told the Lord Duke, here at Milan, that he is to pay my expenses by giving me an estate bringing in six or eight thousand ducats ; which if I had, it would be a great thing ! . . . It is not that I make unreasonable demands, but I am thinking of a revenue which would prevent my being always on the point of dying of hunger, and always on the gridiron. I cannot reduce my expenses, for he that would have influence with his soldiers, is absolutely compelled to spend. You are wise . . . and you well know what I want. I only aspire to receive from His Holiness enough to live like my equals ; as for honour, I will win that by arms. In short, His Holiness must act so that I can live, and that I may have a firm and stable position so that my descendants may enjoy it, without having always to live in terrible anxiety.

“ You will be on the spot, and you will see from day to day, where and how, you can find means of speaking. Therefore behave wisely and prudently, and do not share the secret of our troubles with anybody.

“ And you must tell His Holiness, as of your own accord, the disorder of my affairs, and at Florence, and everything. But do so carefully at the right time and place. . . .

“ We are on the point of leaving Milan to go and find the enemy. May God give us victory !

"I send you the sable you ask for. As for the beautiful fur gloves, there are none here. I commend myself to you."

With her husband's directions fresh in her mind, Maria Salviati passed triumphantly through the ordeal of her interview with the crafty Pope. She hastened to tell Giovanni all about it, writing with her own hand.

". . . This was the answer of His Holiness. That he will never fail Your Highness with regard to the State which is to be given you in Lombardy, and that you need have no doubt about it. You may be quite sure that it will be stable and safe when once you have it, as it will be guaranteed by so great a personage that there will be nothing to fear. If it could not be obtained for you in that country, it would certainly be provided in some other safe place. . . ."

It is quite possible that Giovanni felt less confidence than his wife in these somewhat vague promises. Meanwhile his renown increased every day; indeed his friends in Florence were so alarmed at the reckless courage and audacity of his constant skirmishes, that they wrote to implore him to "take care of himself and not to tempt fortune too much." And that indeed to "save his life . . . was the one thing needful—all the Law and the Prophets."

But this Medici had too much of the Sforza in him to fight like the other condottieri, with such careful discretion that "they might live to fight another day." Mounted on his splendid horse Sultan, with his sword in hand and lance on rest, he



Brogi, photo.

POPE CLEMENT VII. AND FRANÇOIS I.

Panel by Vasari: Palazzo Vecchio, Florence.

rode straight and struck hard at the enemy before him, with all care for his own life absorbed in the passionate desire for victory. Towards the end of January, he led his Black Bands on that famous expedition where he only just missed taking Bayard at Rebec, a wretched position towards the mountains, on the way to Magenta, which the Chevalier sans Peur et sans Reproche had repeatedly told Bonnivet that it was impossible to defend. He was probably left there out of jealousy. In any case he was awakened by a night attack on January 27.

Five hundred light horsemen of the Black Bands had sallied out of Milan, and in order to recognise each other in the darkness, they wore white shirts outside their cuirasses. The watch was taken by surprise, and the French camp would have been theirs, had they taken due precautions and not aroused the enemy by their cries of victory. Bayard, who slept in part of his armour, with his cuirass by his side, was on the alert at once. The "Loyal Serviteur" tells us that "the shouting was great and the alarm hot." All that Bayard could do was to lead the retreat to Abbiategrasso, where Bonnivet was encamped with the main army; but all the tents, some horses, and the baggage were lost, and Bayard's company had a very narrow escape for their lives.

There were constant raids and skirmishes throughout all the villages and everywhere that provisions might be obtained, for the besieged were in want of the necessaries of life. Giovanni was growing very tired of this unprofitable war, in a plague-stricken and desolated country. Both armies suffered terribly, but perhaps the French invaders were most to be

pitied. The Swiss mercenaries deserted in large numbers, for at the first touch of spring, when once the passes were open, the distant mountains called them back to their homes. They could not be expected to remain in exile without food or pay. On the imperial side the Black Bands were in much the same condition, and Giovanni actually left the camp with them and retreated as far as Pavia ; the one thing that mattered to him was that his men should be treated fairly, and on this account he was loved and trusted, far beyond any other leader. He would not return until he had received half the arrears of pay due to his bands. As time passed on, the skirmishes became more fierce and desperate than ever, while the Black Bands were always in the thick of everything. They took Garlasco after the third assault, when the Duke of Urbino had given up all hope ; in the water up to the throat, the soldiers of Giovanni crossed the moats and trenches, and fought their way through the breach with terrible loss of life, while the standard-bearer was drowned in a rushing torrent.

Then Abbiategrasso was taken and retaken, with massacre and plundering ; it was a hot-bed of plague, and the spoils carried to Milan infected all the houses which received them, and in that ill-fated city thousands upon thousands of deaths were the fearful price of that disastrous booty. Yet still this savage war went on, more cruel than ever on both sides, for during that month of April 1524, the rule between the two armies was " No quarter and no mercy ; all who were taken prisoner were massacred." Bonnivet had sent for 8,000 Swiss, but the Black Bands went out to meet them, and they turned and fled

without a blow, "doubtful about their pay, and also in terror of the very name of Giovanni. Never were there such splendid troops as his and so eager for fighting. Bergamo is quite safe, for the Lord Giovanni will see to that," wrote the Venetian ambassador on April 13.

One by one, the plague-stricken towns of Lombardy fell into the hands of the league, and it was in this terrible month that the Chevalier Bayard met with his death. With the most gallant courage he was protecting the retreat of the army, charging incessantly, when the shot of a falconet broke his spine. The tragic and heroic story of his end is too well known to repeat, and his loss to the French Army was irretrievable. Giovanni dei Medici was there: one of the admiring circle of those who had fought against him, and who knew how to value aright so true a hero.

The war was now practically at an end, for the only desire of Bonnivet was to retreat as quickly as possible; and most of his enemies were quite willing that he should do so. But Giovanni delle Bande Nere would have pursued and destroyed them all if he had had his way, for he disdained any compromise. The fame of his exploits had spread through Italy, and in Florence and Rome "he was praised up to the skies, and every mouth was full of his renown." "We are all agreed," writes Suasio, "that if God preserves Your Highness through this campaign, our epoch will have no one to compare with you. May God save you. . . . Madonna sends word that she will soon be at the Trebbio. . . ."

He had been wounded slightly at Abbiategrasso, but took no notice of it. In those days, when five

or six cannon and a few falconets were enough to storm a town, and when the movements of troops were usually so slow that, for instance, the Duke of Milan could receive news from hour to hour of the movements and plans of his enemies, the extraordinary rapidity and valour of the Black Bands carried everything before them. The Pope expressed the greatest admiration of Giovanni, and continued to talk of the state he was to have—Fermo or another—but nothing was settled; and the Captain of the Black Bands still found the greatest difficulty in obtaining the payment of the arrears due to them. Meantime, amongst all these worries, Giovanni has constant amusing and licentious letters from Aretino, with a sonnet here and there, and a love-letter from some Roman lady of light character.

The coming of peace brought fresh troubles to the condottiere when he returned to his mountain fastness at Aulla, but we feel that his neighbours were most to be pitied. Some occupation had to be found for the terrible Black Bands, who were badly paid by the Duke Sforza, and there was redress for encroachments to be paid for by the Pallavicini and the Malespina. The Pope was appealed to, and had to interfere with a letter of warning to his “beloved Giovanni.”

We hear a great deal about the turbulent behaviour of the Black Bands from the letters of Ariosto, the unfortunate poet, who could only obtain any salary from Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara, by accepting the arduous post of Governor of the Garfagnana. He was isolated from all he loved; he was in the midst of a wild and rugged land, without sufficient force to defend it; and he had

to hold his cup level between the brigands on one hand and the formidable Black Bands on the other. In the beginning of July 1524, a company of the Black Bands got entangled in a faction fight before the walls of Camporgiano, which was sacked "with fire and blood." Quarrelling over the booty, the captain, Todeschino, was wounded, and fell into the hands of the Governor Ariosto, who sent full particulars to the Duke of Ferrara. "I wish I could hang all those ruffians . . . but I am not strong enough!" he lamented. Todeschino, before his death, asserted that all this had been done "without the knowledge of the Lord Giovanni"; only, if things had turned out well, he would have approved! Meanwhile, the bands continued to raid the country of the Malespina, and even to take some of them prisoners.

At length matters became so bad that the Pope and the Viceroy Lannoy had to interfere, for there were complaints on every side. The Duke of Ferrara wrote to his ambassador at Naples: "There have come to Pisa, by sea, seven pieces of ammunition to the men of the Lord Giovanni; tell the Viceroy of this." And Castiglione, the ambassador from Mantua, spoke so strongly to the Pope that he sent orders for all the prisoners taken by the bands to be set free. So much pressure was put upon Giovanni that at length he was induced to sell his robber castle of Aulla to the Malespina, for a large sum of money, but these arrangements were not carried out without many struggles. In the following year Pope Clement gave his young condottiere 10,000 francs per month to install him in Rome, and thus prevent him from becoming the ruler of Florence.

Maria Salviati shared all her husband's indignation

at finding himself without employment or a dominion of his own. She wrote :

“ It is very well known that the Duke of Milan gives Giovanni nothing, because the Viceroy does not wish it ; he makes the Duke deceive him as he does himself. If he has not Pontremoli it is quite clear that it is for this reason. It is not enough to say ‘ I sent a man on purpose.’ All the great Lords have a counter-sign, and if that is not on the letter, nothing is done. You will soon see Giovanni utterly ruined.”

This warrior after the ancient style, who fought like a hero of the *Iliad* ; setting free an important prisoner on account of his courage ; always leaving his spoils of war to his men ; was too honest and too generous to make his way, for he was ever ready to speak his mind to Viceroy, Captain-General, or Legate. Implacable when one of his soldiers was wronged, he always took the post of danger, and at any moment would risk his own life to save one of his men. No wonder they loved him for his splendid courage, his fearless justice, and his open-handed generosity. But for all these qualities the Pope was jealous of him, for he threw his own young Alessandro completely into the shade.

On the arrival of an ambassador from the Emperor, with a proposal for universal peace, and nine different ways of securing it, there was a splendid reception in which Giovanni delle Bande Nere rode by the side of the swarthy boy of fourteen, the Pope's Alessandro, and the ambassador wrote : “ I was saluted by as many trumpeters and minstrels, as we are

accustomed to have at the Carnival of Mechlin." We know what a judge of trumpeters Giovanni was !

The whole summer appears to have been spent by him at Rome, in the midst of intrigues and anxious waiting ; but he received several important gifts of money from the Pope. Even Maria and little Cosimo did not escape from the sultry heat of the Eternal City to the cooler air of Trebbio, as we find the bailiff writing, after the vintage : " We hope, notwithstanding the rain, to have good wine, and so much, that if Your Excellency does not come to help us drink it, I shall have enough for ten years."

To find occupation for the Black Bands, in time of peace, was always the great difficulty of their young leader. The Pope had assigned the city of Fano, on the Adriatic, as a place of residence for a great number of them, and Giovanni was frequently thereto look after them—a task which was nosinecure, for they were always in trouble with the citizens. It was here that he was joined by Pietro Aretino, who had managed to fall into disgrace in Rome, although he had really taken extraordinary care not to offend Pope Clement. So much so, that the people complained of the silence of Pasquino, and some poet pasted up a dialogue between a Traveller and Marforio.

" *Traveller.* ' Marforio, since the day when this Pope was elected, your brother Pasquino is grown almost dumb, and Aretino no longer rebukes vice. What have you to say about it ? '

" *Marforio.* ' Why, don't you know that Armellino has cut short Pasquino by giving him to understand that if he makes a sound they will slit his tongue

for him, so the poor fellow does not dare to breathe, much less speak.'

"*Traveller.* 'Pietro Aretino, who was in such high favour, was taken with a mouthful of bait like a frog,* and now he sings but does not want to touch the Court. . . .'"

"The amazing Pietro Aretino" hurried from Arezzo to join Giovanni delle Bande Nere, who gave him a hearty welcome, although it was rather a disappointment for him to have lost a friend at court. They made merry together, but Fano was not Reggio, and they could not revive the wild and turbulent gaiety of those old days. Once more the fair and ill-fated land of Italy is threatened with war, for the imperial army has been repelled from the walls of Marseilles, and the French King, blinded by vanity and ambition, is gaily riding at the head of his army—to meet his fate.

On the same day that Giovanni received this news, the long-promised reward for his services was offered him by the Duke of Milan; this was the rich present of the town and neighbourhood of Busto Arizio, fifteen miles from Milan, which had been confiscated from Trivulzio. The Duke accompanies his gift with glowing words of praise to the young condottiere, "who has deserved honour and glory from the whole army; who has performed such illustrious exploits that their memory is imperishable. This famous warrior, with diligent care and most admirable courage of soul and body, in order to protect Milan from enemies and ambushes... has worn out the enemy night and day by incessant

* Clement VII. made him a Knight of Rhodes.

incursions into their camp, has fought them with the greatest ardour, has cut off their convoys, and intercepted their provisions, until one might almost doubt whether it was the city that was besieged or the enemy."

But Giovanni delle Bande Nere was not one of those who settle down in their well-earned domain and live happily ever after. His restless ambition was once more to lead him astray. Late at night, on October 27, Giovanni arrived in Florence, paused at the entrance of the palace in the Via Larga to salute the Bishop of Cortona and Ippolito dei Medici; then, without dismounting, rode off through the darkness to the Trebbio. Great events were happening: François I. was already before Pavia, full of confidence, with a strong army; and he had set his heart on winning over the warrior Medici to his side. There were strange goings on in the little inn of the Piccolo Cavallo, where the agents on both sides met and bargained. On the last day of October, Giovanni wrote to Fortunati:

"You will tell the Holy Father that notwithstanding what the Duke writes, I do not think we shall agree."

He was at San Secondo, the town he had conquered for Bianca's sons, and it was here that he received the definite offers of the French King, a fortnight later. He thus tells the story to his brother-in-law, the Cardinal Giovanni Salviati, who was at Parma:

"Two messengers came to me yesterday from the King of France, sent by His Majesty that I might go to him. I beg your Most Reverend

Lordship to be good enough to advise and counsel me ; what am I to do ? The names of the envoys are I await your answer."

The next day, he added in a second letter :

" . . . One cannot write everything. I will be with you to-morrow and will treat you to the whole affair ; and Your Most Reverend Highness will see that I have behaved with discretion."

Cardinal Salviati was Legate for Cisalpine Lombardy ; he was one of the most devoted of the young Medici's friends, and he was in constant touch with the Pope, so that he could advise his kinsman with full authority. In point of fact, the crafty and vacillating Clement VII. had come to the conclusion that the French would win in the coming struggle ; and, to obtain favour with François I., he gave his permission to Giovanni delle Bande Nere to enter the service of the French King. On November 19, 1524, the final step was taken, with the full approval of Giberti the Papal datary, who congratulated Giovanni " on having left the ungrateful imperials." A week later the Black Bands were before Pavia, in the French camp, and the King received their leader with enthusiasm, insisting that he should be lodged close to the royal tents, under the shadow of the rich abbey of San Lanfranco.

CHAPTER X

With the Pope's consent, Giovanni passes over to the French—Siege of Pavia—The reckless and marvellous valour of Giovanni in his skirmishes—Giovanni is wounded—He is sent to Piacenza to be cared for—Letter of Cardinal Salviati to Maria—François I. defeated and taken prisoner at Pavia.

“THE passage of the Lord Giovanni dei Medici to the French ” was taken with much ill favour by the imperial party. Pope Clement VII. was too cunning to show his hand, and he tried to make the Emperor believe that it was a headstrong and unauthorised move on the part of his young kinsman. The Venetians, however, were too subtle themselves to be deceived, and they said : “ He is under the Pope's influence ; we can see towards which side the Holy Father inclines.” But in point of fact this treacherous Pontiff was still undecided, as usual ; he wanted to be on good terms with both sides, so that he might join the winner in the end. One day he gave money to Lannoy, the Imperial Viceroy, and the next time, he signed a private treaty with François I. “ God grant that it may turn out well,” wrote the time-serving canons of San Lorenzo to their colleague Fortunati, when they heard of Giovanni's last step.

Meantime, the hero himself troubled not at all as to what might be said of him ; it was quite enough for him to be in that magnificent camp, surrounded by pleasure-loving companions, and to pass in

review, on foot, his immense pike on his shoulder, 3,000 picked troops in the presence of the King and his Court. Not a sortie takes place from the besieged city but Giovanni and his Black Bands are the first to repel it, and his praises are sounded on every side; he is hailed as "nourished in victories from his childhood." We find an order, signed by the French King, "to pay at once 36,000 crowns to the Lord Giovanni dei Medici." Never were such promises as those made to this young leader! He was to have a larger army under him than he had ever commanded before; he was to receive 3,000 crowns of salary, and 2,000 crowns of fixed income a year; his nephews, especially his favourite, Count Pietro, were to be well provided for, and the Collar of the Order of St. Michel was offered to him by the French King.

But Giovanni was too generous and impulsive to take advantage of these lavish offers. He reveals himself fully in a letter to his friend, Pietro Aretino, who was now once more in favour at Rome.

"MY BRAVE PIETRO,—

"... I have been treated like a brother by the King of France. . . . I sent back the Order of St. Michel to this great Prince, and I tore up the treaties which contained the provision for my salary and an income for my wife . . . telling him that he should bestow such a dignity on one who has served him longer than I have, while as for the pay, that should be in proportion to the service. . . . I know there is no need to tell you how to answer those who blame me . . . for I could not do otherwise than I have done. I forgot to tell you

that the King asked me yesterday why I had not brought you here with me. . . . His Majesty bid me write and say that you are to come. . . . I cannot live without the Aretino.

“ From Pavia.

“ Thy GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI.”

It was all very well to tear up agreements in this chivalrous way, but disaster may come to any great King, and then the condottiere is in a very bad way who has nothing to justify his claims. As for the Order, we can quite understand that Giovanni, who felt that he might have to change sides again, was unwilling to bind his honour by the needful oath of allegiance to France. He was always very punctilious about his ideal of honour. Meantime he was on the most friendly terms with this open-handed prince, who one day, when some horses were wounded in a skirmish in his presence, immediately presented the company engaged with 600 to replace their loss.

When the Duke of Albany was sent with an army towards Naples, to draw away troops from Pavia, there was no one but Giovanni, with a company of his Black Bands, who was thought capable of protecting the convoy of artillery sent against Pescara. On December 16, Giovanni remained on horseback at San Donnino all the wintry night, on guard, and the imperial army was compelled to retreat. A little later he reviewed the Swiss mercenaries, to the number of 10,000 most excellent troops, and the next day passed in review before the King his own splendid Black Bands. All went off with great honour, and there was special satisfaction in the fact that on January 2, 1525, the soldiers of Giovanni

punctually received their pay—quite a new experience for them.

They well deserved it, for they were in the forefront of every attack ; they were engaged in constant skirmishes in the marches ; they were sent to burn neighbouring villages suspected of treachery ; to collect provisions from the neighbourhood ; in short, all the laborious and dangerous work fell to the lot of the Black Bands, who suffered terrible loss, while their gallant leader was in constant peril of his life. One day, Leyva, the Governor of Pavia, had gained an advantage against the Black Bands ; had killed several of them and taken four of their banners, which were defiantly hung on the city walls. Giovanni was furious, and swore to avenge his men, whose life and honour were always dearer to him than his own.

Several stories are told of Giovanni which show his mood at this time. One day there was a discussion going on in the camp, in the King's presence, about the various ways of taking an important post near the city. Giovanni delle Bande Nere, who had not spoken, rose after the last words. " Sacred Majesty," he exclaimed ; " Your Highness has more need of results than of advice. Let me do it." He took a few of his own men, and without a cuirass, just as he was, he stormed the place before the King ; absolutely reckless of danger, he had a horse killed under him, and half maddened with the awful risks, he massacred all before him. François I., who had never seen anything like his fighting, made him a royal gift before the whole army.

Another time, it so chanced that Giovanni was pursuing one of his servants who had disobeyed

him, and his horse carried him into the ranks of the Swiss who, not recognising him in his simple dress, got in his way and began to make fun of him. Giovanni went back to his quarters in a rage ; he armed his men, and would have made an end of the Swiss had not the King been warned and implored him to forgive them. But all the Swiss captains had to beg his pardon on their knees, before the proud young Medici would consent to forgive the affront.

This was the man who had sworn vengeance upon the enemy. He only remembered one thing, that the Spaniards had beaten his Black Bands. In a letter to his brother-in-law, the Cardinal Salviati, he tells him that the camp of the enemy was only a cannon-shot distant, and “we have the most beautiful skirmishes in the world every day in the presence of the King and the Court, going as far as the tents of the Spaniards.”

The friends of Giovanni were in constant alarm at his reckless valour, and the Cardinal, who was specially devoted to the friend of his childhood, wrote thus to Maria Salviati :

“MOST CHERISHED AND MAGNIFICENT SISTER,—

“I have received your letter with great pleasure, in which I learn that you and Cosimo are both in good health ; I love him with all my heart, and my most earnest desire is that you should make him study well ; encourage him from me and tell him that if he does not learn, I will bring him no beautiful presents on my return.

“His Lordship [Giovanni] cannot be more beloved, nor in higher favour and reputation with the Most Christian King, and this is only just, for he

does everything ; he alone attacks the King's enemies with his troops more than all the rest of the French Army ; and he does things which are written about and boasted of from both camps as marvellous and supernatural. But as these cannot be performed without manifest peril, he does not leave my mind a moment's peace with regard to him, although I have at present so many other serious anxieties. God is my witness that in this world I have neither brother nor sister so dear to me as His Lordship Giovanni. . . ."

We may imagine how much this kind letter added to the poor wife's constant fears, for she well knew how absolutely useless any words of caution on her part would be. Her terrible anxiety was only too soon justified.

On that eventful Saturday, February 17, Giovanni took his vengeance. He rode forth at night with a small company and succeeded in drawing the Imperials, under Antonio de Leyva, into one of those ambushades which he knew so well how to prepare. By a pretended flight, the enemies were enticed into the trap, and saw the Black Bands suddenly turn and burst upon them, riddle them with blows and drive them back, with fearful loss, to the very gates of Pavia. Giovanni, covered with blood, intoxicated with savage joy and radiant with his victory, was riding towards the camp in triumph when he met the French General Bonnivet, who asked him what had happened. When he heard the story, Bonnivet exclaimed : " Let us go back ; show me the place."

Giovanni was delighted to ride back and point out the place where the massacre occurred ; they



Brogi, photo.

Bust by San Gallo: Bargello, Florence.

GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE.

even delayed in order to count the slain, and, in doing so, drew near to a ruined hut where some of the enemy's gunners were hiding. When Giovanni delle Bande Nere was within range, a shot was fired, and a heavy ball * struck his right leg below where the cuirass ended. The soldier had aimed well, and the mediæval warrior was laid low by that "abominable artillery" by which, like his contemporary Bayard, he was destined to pay the full penalty of his old-fashioned contempt. He was carried back to the camp, and the King came himself to visit the wounded man, who was in great pain. The Court physician probed the wound and found that, although the bone and the nerves were injured, there was no present danger. The ball had penetrated straight through, above the ankle, driving in pieces of bone, broken chain-mail, and bits of stuff—just at the place where the greave, which protected most of the leg, left a space above the "soleret."

There was great dismay at the news of this accident. and the Pope, in real fear of losing his champion, sent orders that Giovanni should be carried at once by water to Piacenza to be nursed. The message was brought by the most famous surgeon of Bologna,† who was also entrusted with some holy and precious oil for curing wounds. This was the letter of Pope Clement, brought by his chamberlain :

"TO GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI, wounded.

"DEAR SON,—

"We send you salutation and Apostolic benediction. We have been deeply grieved by this misfortune . . . and we send our command that

* Weighing 11 oz.

† Giacomo da Carpi.

you suffer yourself to be transported to Piacenza. . . . Do not delay, as there, in the hands of your own people, you will be more conveniently cared for. . . . You can do nothing which will give us more pleasure. . . .

“Given at Rome.”

The King also insisted, and the wounded man suffered himself to be carried to the barge, which bore him smoothly down the Po to Piacenza, on February 21. He had a safe-conduct and a strong escort provided by Lannoy and Pescara, which was most necessary, or he would have been torn to pieces by the people who lived on the river banks, so great was the fear and hatred he had inspired. Cardinal Salviati met him, and waited till the next day before he sent news of the accident to his sister Maria, when at the same time he could give a hopeful account of the invalid.

“MUCH BELOVED, MAGNIFICENT SISTER,—

“I would not write to you before, concerning the misfortune which has befallen the Lord Giovanni . . . not to keep you in suspense. But now that by the grace of God, all is going well.” [He tells the story.] “When I heard this on Sunday, I was more distressed than I have ever been in my life. . . . I sent couriers at once in every direction . . . and at last Giovanni consented to come here. . . . He has been well cared for, and to-day, which is the fourth day and the change of moon, he has seemed very well, so that my mind is at rest and I am full of courage. And I implore you to be the same, assuring you

that there is no danger and the doctors believe that he will quite recover. . . . He is very patient and as obedient as an angel. As I said, you may have your mind at rest, and accept from God this small evil, as preserving us from a much greater misfortune. For seeing how he defied the artillery, and was ever in most evident peril, and took upon himself all the fighting in the camp, one might any day expect much worse than this.

“I must not omit to tell you that if the accident had happened to one of his sons, the Most Christian King could not have felt more than he did for His Lordship; he has been never weary of sending him presents, visiting him and bestowing upon him every mark of affection, which was only just. . . . I will keep you informed day by day of his progress, and when I do not write to you, you will learn everything from our father’s letters.” (The Pope had sent Salviati, Maria’s father, to be on the spot and give him news.) The cardinal adds a few lines in his own hand: “My dearly cherished little sister; be of good courage; only now, the doctors told me when I was present at the dressing of Giovanni, that his wound is without any danger, and that he will feel no evil result from it.”

He made good progress, was very gay, sang and talked nonsense with his devoted brother-in-law. Yet he had been most unwilling to leave the camp at Pavia, for he knew that his Black Bands would be of little use without him. He had declared that if the impending battle should be fought before he was well, he would have himself carried to the ramparts that he might watch and command his men, if he

could not serve in person. But the great, the decisive, the fatal battle was fought sooner than was expected, on February 24, while Giovanni was dictating a cheerful letter to console his poor little wife.

“ILLUSTRIOUS LADY AND MOST LOVING WIFE,—

“I have seen your letter and that of Fortunati to the Most Reverend Salviati. Do not be so ready to believe the worst, for men who have flesh, and blood, and bones, are not cut up like turnips. On the eighteenth of the present month I received a wound in my leg from a gun shot, and in order to be more easily cured I was carried to Piacenza where the Most Reverend [Salviati] was; and thank God, I shall have passed the fourth day after the wound and the change of moon without inconvenience or fever; and these doctors say positively that in twenty days I shall leave my bed without danger either of life or infirmity.

“Thus do not let Your Ladyship grieve so much; I shall be all right. With this assurance, think of living joyfully and praying to God. I commend myself to you.

“From Piacenza, the 24th of *February*, 1525.

“From your most loving husband,

“GIOVANNI DEI MEDICI.”

The wounded man was in excellent spirits, for the famous Hebrew surgeon, Abraham of Mantua, had been sent by the French King to attend upon him; and by taking out a number of splinters he had eased the pain and given great relief. Giovanni felt so well that he ordered his armour to be placed on his bed.

At that very moment, how terrible was the need

for Giovanni delle Bande Nere on the fatal field beneath the walls of Pavia! François I. always declared that if that gallant soldier had been by his side, he would never have been reduced to that last depth of humiliation, when—wounded in the face and hand, his lance broken, himself unhorsed and entangled in his splendid armour—the King of France was compelled to give up his sword and own himself prisoner. What must have been the feelings of Giovanni himself when he heard the next day that his splendid Black Bands, forming the right wing of the French Army—led by the Duke of Suffolk and François de Lorraine, who both fell beneath the impetuous overwhelming rush of Bourbon's landsknechte—had been driven back with great loss after an heroic resistance? By what irony of fate had this unfortunate accident befallen their leader at so critical a moment?

That he, the greatest soldier of the day, should have been laid aside on a sick bed when the decisive battle of the whole campaign was fought, was indeed a cruel disaster to Giovanni delle Bande Nere, although his personal friends looked upon it as a merciful escape for him. Yet his chief anxiety just then was to keep at his bedside the famous surgeon, Abraham, in whom he placed his only hope of complete recovery. Splinters of bone and lead appear to have constantly been removed from the wound; but the palace at Parma was not a very comfortable place for an invalid, as one night there was such a terrible noise of fighting downstairs that Giovanni sprang from his bed in a rage, and threw back his recovery for some time. Meantime it was fortunate for him that he had some one at Rome to look after

his interests. Maria Salviati realised, with her clear insight, the utter ruin of her husband's position caused by the defeat of the French. She knew that her only hope was in the treacherous Pope Clement, whose intrigues and dissimulation had been at the root of everything. She saw how her Giovanni had lost the affection and respect of his own countrymen by his unfortunate alliance with France, and all her efforts were set on undoing the harm already done, in reinstating her husband in public opinion, and at the same time in obtaining from the Pope the money absolutely necessary for his Black Bands and himself.

It was a tremendous and almost hopeless task which the young wife had undertaken, and she was most loyally seconded by the devoted Fortunati. But when the result did not satisfy Giovanni, with the fretfulness of a sick man he blamed the good priest in such violent language that Maria wrote bravely in his defence, and declared that she herself was cruelly affronted.

" . . . Yes, I, who have done my best, have received such a blow that I shall never dare to look any one in the face," she writes in her despair. " But, thank God, I have a father and mother who will never fail me, otherwise I would strangle myself with my own hands. . . . In all this business, I have seen what power I have with regard to our interests. I tell you, Giovanni, I had no such confidence in anybody of this lower world as in you, but I have seen this time what I am. I will arrange matters in quite another fashion than I have done up to this day. . . ."

Poor young wife ! She wrote bitter letters at first,

but they soon became calmer and merely formal. And meantime she had her little Cosimo to think of—that silent, cold, inscrutable child; and for his sake she left Rome in the burning summer weather, and went first to Florence and then to the mountain castle of the Trebbio. But Fortunati was ill, and, to his bitter regret, could not accompany his mistress nor his “little master.”


By slow degrees Giovanni recovered from his wound, but he was advised to complete his cure by going to the mud-baths of Abana, about six miles from Padua. On the way he delayed to take up the command of his Black Bands. They were ever an anxiety in time of peace, and the great difficulty always was to find some safe place where they might be lodged, without getting into too much mischief. Giovanni received two letters the same day about them. One was from a captain of his: “Most Illustrious Lord, there is a great difference between thinking out a thing in one’s chamber, and putting it in execution; the troops are not easy to lodge out”; and the other letter was from the Governor of Romagna: “. . . The complaints of all these people arrive with so much force to the Holy Father, that His Holiness sees himself obliged to listen to them and help them. I therefore beg Your Excellency to be good enough to restore order.” This was easier said than done. The only way was to pay the expenses of any outrage which could not be prevented; and the bill for these Black Bands in Romagna alone, came to more than seven hundred ducats a month.

On his way to Abana, going by sea from Chioggia, Giovanni had to pass through Venice, where he was

received with princely hospitality and lodged with his suite of forty people in the Palazzo Giustiani, opposite the Salute. He remained here for several weeks, and the Republic made him most flattering offers if he would enter into the service of San Marco. But he wisely refused, for the crafty Venetians, who always liked to remain neutral, would have found little use for so warlike and decided a champion as the young Medici. Before leaving Venice, he received from his bailiff at Trebbio the full list of his pack of hounds, and particulars of those sent on to Abana, where Giovanni hoped to relieve the tedium of taking mud-baths by a little hunting in the plains of Padua and the Euganean Hills. The goshawks were not in condition that year, but Giuliano, the kennel-groom, brought with him a dozen hounds, and a dog for the burrows or brushwood, called Serpent. The condition of the kennels at Trebbio was excellent, as there were about forty harriers, bloodhounds, and setters, besides seven young hounds and "five puppies of La Seiche, which look like mastiffs." Giuliano, the kennel-groom, was able to give the fullest particulars about them all. Lorenzo Salviati had sent Giovanni an Arab horse, and Maria forwarded him pheasants, peacocks, and partridges.

Evidently he had some relaxation while he was taking his cure, and in July he went on to Ferrara, where he could talk over the baths with Duke Alfonso, who had taken them himself some years before. It was an excellent country for game, and they had some good sport. But Giovanni did some business here; he sent his secretary, Cantelupo, over to France to press his claims, for since Pavia

he had never received any pay, past or present, for his Black Bands, or the princely salary promised him. Did Giovanni now regret, at his leisure, that quixotic tearing-up of bonds and agreements which left him without a legal claim? No notice appears to have been taken of his appeal; indeed at that moment, when the King's sister Marguerite was on the point of setting forth for Spain and the whole kingdom was disturbed and full of anxiety, the Medici condottiere had no chance of obtaining justice. So he turned his attention to other matters, and went back to his favourite castle of the Trebbio and devoted himself to his hunting and fishing. A letter of this time from his bailiff says: ". . . He is not quite so strong on the injured leg as on the other, although I was told yesterday, he ran some way behind a pheasant to catch it."



CHAPTER XI

Trouble with the Malespini—Giovanni takes to the life of a corsair at Fano, on the Adriatic—When war begins, he enters the service of France and the Pope—His marvellous exploits at the siege of Milan.

It was well for Giovanni delle Bande Nere that he had recovered his health and strength at Abana, as he had a difficult task before him. During his illness, the irrepressible Malespini had been ravaging the Lunigiano and seizing, not only the domain of Giovanni, but the strongholds which belonged to Florence, which were badly fortified, with rusty arquebuses and old-fashioned arms. During the month of August, while their leader remained at the Trebbio, the Black Bands carried on their usual style of aggressive warfare in the disputed land; they were joined by many of the inhabitants, and they plundered and burnt the places which resisted them. But before long, Giovanni received the serious news that all the tribe of the Malespini, the Marchese Lorenzo, the Marchese Spinetta, and various others had combined to besiege Aulla, with 2,000 men, some Spanish knights, and three great cannon which they had brought from Sarzana.

The Medici condottiere lost not a moment; on the night of Monday, September 18, he suddenly appeared at the foot of the Aulla rock, with fifty light horsemen and 700 foot-soldiers. Now it

was his turn to carry all before him. At the first rumour of his coming, the lordly Malespini had fled, and he soon recovered everything—both his own lands and those of Florence. But he was tired of this petty warfare after his taste of real fighting, and by September 27, he had made arrangements to sell all his property on the banks of the Magra, and all the places he had taken, for the sum of 2,500 golden crowns. The money was paid and the receipt was signed before the notary, Ser Pietro dei Medici da Panicale, and the Malespini entered into the long-disputed possession; and soon paid their expenses by plundering their neighbours and their vassals.

Meantime Maria was at Florence, and her letters are full of details about the illness and death of Pietro Francesco, who did not even name his cousin Giovanni in his will; but she wants to know if little Cosimo is to wear mourning. And the boy himself writes in his big childish hand:

“Most Illustrious Lord, my father. I desire very much that before the departure of your Lordship, you will give me leave to come and see you at the Trebbio. I could not at present have any greater favour or joy, and I commend myself to your Lordship, whom may God preserve. . . .”

A most suitable and becoming letter for a tutor to dictate to the little prince!

Giovanni was now recognised as the head of the younger Medici branch, and one step which he took in this capacity is characteristic. He wrote to Cardinal Passerini that his cousin had left many

debts, and as it was his opinion that "honour goes before masses," he thought that the Holy Father's money ought to pay these, rather than the thousand masses for his soul which Pietro Francesco had asked for. But the eager condottiere had other things of far more importance to think of. What was to be done to find employment for his terrible Black Bands and keep them together? A great number had been disbanded after the defeat of Pavia, and his Corsican captains were writing, imploring him to take them back in his service. Important events were happening on every side, the rivalry between the Emperor and the King of France was more desperate than ever, and Giovanni looked forward hopefully, and prayed for war.

But while this peace, so costly for him, still lingered on, the Medici warrior looked about him for means of living. His incessant claims had hitherto met with no response in France, and the Pope gave him fair promises, but nothing came of them. Giovanni went to Fano, that picturesque little city on the Adriatic, with a new idea in his mind. He would become a corsair, he would man vessels with his dauntless troops, be a pirate against the pirates who swarmed on that coast of the Adriatic and plundered everywhere triumphantly—that year when the Turk had been so victorious on land. Giovanni had long had a special liking for Fano; he had longed for it as a Principality where he might live and keep his chosen bands around him. But now he cast his eyes upon the delicious port of Ancona, some miles to the south, that harbour so beautifully sheltered between the promontories of Monte Astagno and Monte Guasco; that city, with its rich commerce—

the next to Venice, Queen of the Sea. Fano, with its strong fortifications, cannot be compared to the many attractions of Ancona. But if he should venture on taking it by storm, in these later days, it was absolutely necessary to have artillery. Greatly daring, he wrote to the Duke of Ferrara to supply him; but the prudent Alfonso replied courteously that with rumours of war on every side, he would need all his guns for his own defence. He offered money instead, but this Giovanni declined, as he had at last received an advance of 3,000 ducats from France.

If he could not take Ancona, at least Giovanni delle Bande Nere spent a very merry time at Fano with the help of his friend Pietro Aretino, who had been finally driven from Rome, where he narrowly escaped the daggers of hired cut-throats. His devotion to his soldier friend was partly due to the feeling that, with him, he was certain of protection. The young Medici was leading a life of dissipation on land, while at the same time he thoroughly enjoyed his pirate game. He already had a small flotilla in which he trained his men to go to sea and learn something of naval warfare, but when his ambition was satisfied by obtaining a brigantine, as a standing threat against Ancona, this corsair-prince seems to have been satisfied with coasting along the shore, and he never even had the good fortune to meet the Turk.

His friends in Rome smiled at these nautical amusements which served to keep the turbulent captain out of mischief, for war was at hand, and then he would be wanted in serious earnest. Their only trouble was that he was spending too much

money on arming and manning his galleys and his brigantine, which he delighted to command in person, and sail with as far as the harbour of Ancona. For this he had pawned his massive gold chain and his houses in Fano—even his costly garments, so that he was reduced to beg some cloth from one of the Salviati. And all this time Maria saw to her household in Florence, watched over little Cosimo, and did her best to settle up the business affairs between her husband and his nephews, the sons of the late Pietro Francesco. Time had mellowed and softened her passionate affection for her Giovanni; she was learning to work as of old for his interests, but at the same time to bear his absence with increasing patience, and his faults with a broader toleration.

At length the Holy League of Cognac, signed on May 22, 1526, let loose the dogs of war and recalled the leader of the Black Bands to his true profession. He was to continue in the service of the Pope and France, whose King had broken all his promises to the Emperor, and who was once more about to tempt fortune in that ever-coveted land of Italy, although he would not risk his sacred person again. On June 6 Giovanni received from the Papal treasury 2,500 ducats to raise 2,000 foot-soldiers, soon increased to 4,000 and Guicciardini met him at Modena with the Papal brief. This curious document, written in bad Latin, protested that His Holiness was only fighting to preserve the peace of all Christendom; it gave the highest praise to Giovanni, and added: “. . . Of all our infantry and that of Holy Church, such as it is and will be, we make and constitute you Captain-General, by these presents. . . .”

The only authority above him was that of Federico

of Mantua and Francesco Guicciardini, Lieutenant-General for the States of the Church, who wrote from Modena on June 15: "We start from here to-morrow morning, the Lord Giovanni and myself, and I cannot desire a better disposition, from all points of view, than he shows at present." His gentleness even went so far as to receive under him his former captain, Paolo Luzasco, who was now in the pay of Mantua. But when he was established in the camp formed at Marignano, worse trials than this were before him; Guido Rangone—the experienced condottiere from Bologna, who had fought in many a war, even against the Turk—contested the rank of General, and there was constant discord between these two imperious hot-tempered men. But fortunately for Guicciardini, who found it impossible to keep the peace, the army soon moved towards Milan and Giovanni was once more free to throw all his tremendous energy into those skirmishes where he was without a rival. Since the days when he had studied his map of Lombardy to such good purpose, he had learnt to know most intimately every yard of that country where he had fought so often.

He it was who gave advice where the camp should be placed to guard the approaches to Milan, showing how he understood the strategy of warfare at the same time as he carried out the most astounding and brilliant feats of arms which dazzled friends and foes alike. His insight and sagacity in planning some expedition unheard of in its daring, were only equalled by the indomitable spirit and valour with which he carried it to a successful end. Even Guicciardini, who hated all unnecessary risk, writes

with enthusiasm to Giberti at Rome: "I have decided to write to you My Lord Datary, as the Lord Giovanni is the very nerve and the soul of this camp, and is recognised as such by his friends and his enemies." He also adds that this leader, to whom they owed everything, had not received any pay from France and was in extreme need!

Yet he received most flattering messages through his envoy in France. He was to take more care of himself as his loss would be fatal to the cause. ". . . Madame [the Queen-mother] said that the King had told her several times that if it had not been for Your Lordship being wounded, he would never have been taken prisoner and he would never have lost the battle. . . ." Giovanni delle Bande Nere was now inscribed in the service of France for "50 lances, 50 men-at-arms and 100 light horsemen," to receive 9,300 francs, assigned on the August fair of Lyons. Cantelupo undertook to bring back the whole amount, after deducting 260 crowns for his expenses.

The vacillation of the Duke of Urbino, who was in command, was a constant grievance to Giovanni. Early in July a strong assault was to be made on Milan, but when everything seemed to promise success, the Duke suddenly gave orders that there was to be a general retreat of the army. Before the night was well advanced, he himself saw to the departure of the Venetian troops and the artillery, and he sent word to the other Captains of the League that they were to follow him. The dismay was universal, yet all reluctantly obeyed except Giovanni, who indignantly refused to take part in this shameful retreat, vowing that he and his Black Bands would



Hanfstaengl, photo.

Titian: Vienna.

FILIPPO STROZZI

wait until broad daylight. This he did, slowly and defiantly retiring in full view of the enemy, and without the loss of a single man, always himself in the rear, a shield and protection to his company.

But this retreat was only a passing incident in that terrible, long-drawn-out siege. The Imperialists took possession of the citadel, and the poor figure-head of a Duke, Francesco Sforza, retreated from the struggle to recover his ruined health. Giovanni delle Bande Nere was the very heart and soul of the besieging army. With reckless valour, he waylaid convoys of provisions and ammunition, he carried out the most daring skirmishes successfully, ever foremost in attack at the head of his splendid companies. Amongst the many incidents recorded of him, we are told that he could pierce an enemy through and through with his lance, cast him into a ditch and ride on, without having brought his horse to a stand.

Bandello tells us an amusing story to relieve the gloom of that dreary siege. Machiavelli was sent by Florence on an embassy to the camp, and having written so learnedly on the "Art of War," he was much interested in talking over the practice of it with his old friend Giovanni dei Medici, a fellow Tuscan. Anxious to prove his theories, the ambassador obtained permission to perform a manœuvre with the foot soldiers, according to the rules which he had laid down in his book. "Messire Nicolas kept us in that place for two hours under the burning sun, trying to arrange the men in the prescribed order, but he never could succeed in doing it. All the time he talked so well and so clearly, and by his discourse showed that the thing was so extraordinarily

easy that I, in my ignorance, lightly believed that I could myself have arranged this infantry in battle order. . . . Seeing that there was no chance of Messire Niccolo finishing the business for a long time, Giovanni said to me: 'Bandello, I must get our men out of this difficulty, in order that we may go and have our dinner.' Then, having told Machiavelli to retire and to let him command—in the twinkling of an eye, by the help of drums, all the troops were marshalled in various manners and positions to the extreme admiration of the spectators. . . .” At dinner Machiavelli laughed pleasantly at his misadventure of the morning, and turning to his host remarked: “My Lord, I feel quite sure that if you had not come to my help . . . we should still be there in the open field with the sun shining down upon us. It is not the first pleasure I have received from your Grace and I hope it will not be the last. . . .”

As time passed, Giovanni grew very weary of this camp, with its constant intrigues and petty quarrels. He felt homesick for his Tuscany; he constantly suffered from fever, and could not touch the heavy cheese of Milan, and asked for the delicate little cheeses of the Trebbio, which Maria took care to have sent to him, while at the same time she ordered chestnuts for Cosimo, who was with her in Florence, where they had gone to avoid the heavy autumn rains. It is strange, after hundreds of years, to find his wife's letters still preserved, beside the gushing, adoring effusions of the Aspasia who pursued Giovanni so shamelessly, with the help of Pietro Aretino, his evil genius, who had joined him in the camp.

Yet nothing interfered with the whole-hearted

devotion of the leader of the Black Bands to his warlike duties. Guicciardini breaks out into this splendid praise, comparing him to the other captains.

“Is it my fault if the Lord Giovanni exercises his infantry, and if he, Rangone, lets his go to sleep? Is it my fault if the Lord Giovanni is ready to throw himself at any hour into the midst of peril, and if he insists on having for his companies, captains who will fight and who are true soldiers? And if that other [Rangone] has only men unfit for war, without reputation and without valour . . . making them serve him as a kind of escort . . . ? Is it my fault if the Lord Giovanni at all hours meets his foot-soldiers face to face, arming them, arranging them and making good each company; and if this other one [Rangone] never sees his men, never thinks of them, neither arms nor regulates his companies, so that they deteriorate. . . . ? And if he [Guido Rangone] does not rob them himself, he suffers them to be openly robbed by his captains, and so openly that it is a shame! These are the reasons which have prevented me from diminishing the foot-soldiers of the Lord Giovanni; on the contrary, if I had my way, I would add to them . . . and get rid of all the others. . . .”

By such constant representations, the Pope was at length worked upon to grant Giovanni the desire of his heart; threatened with losing his services, he gave him Fano, the town which he desired with such passionate longing. In order to do this, Clement VII. had to make amends to the present owner, Commenus, Prince of Macedonia, and the gift was to be kept secret for the present. But Giovanni delle Bande Nere, having been once deceived, felt no security

in promises. How indeed could he trust this Pope, who kept the Black Bands in his pay secretly while he openly proclaimed that "they were in the service of the King of France"?

Already those terrible landsknechte were crossing the Alps under Frundsberg, and Clement VII. hoped to use his gallant kinsman as a shield and defence. Guicciardini would have checked the torrent of invasion on the frontiers, or at least at the first great obstacle, like the Po; and the great point and necessity was to prevent the junction of Frundsberg with the army of the Duc de Bourbon. Nothing could teach wisdom to the crafty, treacherous Pope; even the raid of the Colonna upon Rome was forgotten, with all the promises which, in his terror, he had made to the Emperor. Not even the terrible disaster which had just overwhelmed all Christendom—when King Louis of Hungary and his whole army were defeated and slain by the Turks on the fatal field of Mohàcs—could rouse the Holy Father from his petty intrigues, his blindness and vacillation, which were to bring down upon him swift and fatal retribution.

A new element had entered into the tangled politics of distracted Italy—the coming from afar of that motley horde of Frundsberg, partly composed of fanatical Lutherans who looked upon Rome as the sink of all iniquity, and the greatest tragedy of the Renaissance was steadily drawing near to its close.

CHAPTER XII

Coming of Frundsberg and the landsknechte—Giovanni checks their crossing the Po—He is wounded—Carried to Mantua through the snow—Tragic story of his fortitude—Death of Giovanni die Medici (delle Bande Nere)—His monuments and its fame.

NOTHING can stay the onward march of those Northern barbarians, and once more Italy will be at their mercy. At Piacenza they joined the other branch of the imperial army under Bourbon, and the Duke of Ferrara became their willing accomplice. He was a most valuable ally at this moment, for he could supply provisions and, above all, artillery, of which the landsknechte were destitute.

As news of this invading flood reached the Pope, he was wild with terror as to his personal safety; and at one moment Giovanni delle Bande Nere was to bring the Black Bands to his defence in Rome, then he was to guard the Adda and the Po. The burning question was: Where would the imperial troops cross the rivers? Would it be by the well-known bridge across the Po at Borgoforte? What route would they take? Tidings came that on November 21 they were at Castiglione, between the Lake of Garda and Mantua; therefore it seemed that they were not bound for Milan.

Giovanni and the Duke of Urbino turned back to meet the enemy, with an army of 9,000 foot-

soldiers, 1,000 light horsemen and 600 lances. On November 24 there was a rumour at Modena that Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara, had secretly sent some artillery up the river Po. This was mostly in the form of falconets—heavy clumsy guns, with shot weighing over three pounds, which in that transitional state of warfare, betwixt the old and the new, were destined to do terrible execution.

Here, as we pause for a moment before the final scene of our drama, we feel carried back to those stately tragedies of ancient Greece where, with slow, unswerving tread, impending fate advances. As in a dream, we watch the secret, stealthy approach, in the dead of night, of barges up the river from Ferrara, bearing those deadly falconets, the unheeded messengers of death. Then, all the events of that fatal November day pass before us in grim succession. We see the deadly skirmish of the rear-guard to defend the passage across the famous bridge of Borgoforte ; the brief check of the Black Bands at the hunting park of the Serraglio, defended by its broad ditches ; and we lament the hours wasted by the weak delays of the Duke of Urbino, until Giovanni is almost driven wild.

Then, at length, he has his way. Carrying out his usual tactics—a blend of genius and reckless valour—Giovanni delle Bande Nere harasses the enemy with his far smaller force, secure in the knowledge that never in the open country has he known defeat. Followed by his dauntless bands, he hurls himself upon the serried mass of landsknechte with their great pikes ; like another Hector, ever foremost in the fray, he drives all before him, and like that hero of old he meets his fate in the very moment of triumph.

He had never noticed an entrenchment in a brick-field near, behind which a falconet was placed, and from whence a well-aimed shot struck him down. As he turned his war-horse Sultan, thinking the day was won, once more he was wounded in his leg, which was only protected in front by the greave, now made lighter and smaller than of old. But this was a far more serious wound than that of Pavia; the heavy ball had struck him with such force that, as he fell from his charger, he was at first thought to be killed.

As in the case of the Chevalier Bayard, Giovanni delle Bande Nere was destroyed by one of those modern inventions which both those paladins, warriors of the old style, despised and hated—those treacherous guns which placed the bravest knight on a level with the mere recruit, and laid low all chivalry and valour!

Giovanni was in such desperate case that they dared not move him at once, even to his own camp. In that marshy swamp near Governolo, on the banks of the Mincio; * exposed to the icy blast of a freezing wind, beneath the threatening heaven, black as a funeral pall, the wounded man endured those first hours of agony. An urgent message was sent at once to Mantua for the famous Hebrew surgeon Abraham, who had been so successful before. Messire Benedetto, secretary of the Marchese, writes thus:

“The Lord Giovanni dei Medici has been wounded by the shot of a falconet in the leg, and from what I am told is extremely ill. He has not yet been carried to his lodging [in the camp]; the Lord Duke implores Your Excellency to order Messire Abraham to come

* Just before the Mincio joins the Po.

here at once, flying ! His Lordship has been wounded in skirmishing against the landsknechte who are still at Governolo . . . they fired many shots of falconet, which perplexes everybody here very much, for we cannot imagine where they got that artillery. . . .

“ The Lord Duke has ordered that the foot-soldiers and other troops of this army [the Holy League] who are at present here should return to the neighbourhood of Brescia ; I conclude from this that the landsknechte will be no farther pursued, especially if they cross the Po, which it is said they will be able to do. . . .

“ San Nicolo del Po.” (Little village between Borgoforte and Ostiglio.)

Francesco Maria, “ Lord Duke ” of Urbino, was only too glad of an excuse to draw back from the arduous and dangerous task of checking this tremendous invasion of Imperialists. Now he would be free to *retreat* as often as he liked, when the fiery Giovanni was no longer there to urge him on and compel him to incessant fighting. It has been often questioned whether Francesco Maria had some inward weakness of character, or whether indeed this desire for avoiding battle when he—the Captain-General of the Venetians—was practically the head of the army of the League, might not spring from a deep, smouldering hatred of the Medici family, whose head, Leo X. had once so cruelly robbed him of his duchy.

However, the Duke was not wanting in due courtesy and he wrote himself, the next day, to the Marchese of Mantua to hasten the coming of Messire Abraham.

“Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Lord, my cousin. . . . You will have learnt the misfortune which has befallen the Lord Giovanni, and I prayed you to send Messire Abraham immediately. . . . I implore you to do so as soon as possible. . . .

“November 25, 1526.”

The Marquess of Mantua, Federico, was in a difficult position, as he was both Captain-General of the Pope, and a feudatory of the Empire ; but he could not do otherwise than receive the Giovanni dei Medici in Mantua. It was a painful journey for the wounded man, to be borne more than seven long weary miles in his litter, in the most severe wintry weather, through a blinding snow-storm. He was escorted by the captains of his Black Bands, their hearts full of rage and despair, for never would they look upon his like again ; there was no one to compare with their gallant leader. His dangerous condition seems to have been thoroughly recognised at once. The terrible wound was in the same leg which had already been injured ; the bones were broken, the nerves cut asunder and the muscles torn. But Giovanni bore the awful pain without a groan. They carried him through the tempest across those “sad Virgilian meads,” to the house of his early friend, Lodovico Gonzaga, in the city of Mantua, and there he was welcomed with the utmost kindness and care. All was done for him that the skill of Messire Abraham and other doctors could do for him, but they soon decided that the only hope was in amputation.

His friend Pietro Aretino had been sent for in haste from the camp, and we cannot do better than tell the sad story in the words of his famous letter. His

account of the accident and all that happened before the arrival at Mantua is of course from hearsay, but it is so characteristic as to be worthy of quotation.

“ When the hour drew near, which the Fates, with the consent of God, had fixed as the end of our Master, His Highness was attacking with his usual terrible force Governolo, around which the enemy had entrenched themselves, and while thus engaged a musket ball broke the leg which was already wounded by an arquebus. As soon as he felt the blow, fear and melancholy fell on the army and joy and ardour died in all hearts. Everybody forgot himself, and in thinking of the occurrence wept, complaining of fate for having so senselessly brought to death the noblest and most excellent general in the memory of centuries, at the very beginning of more than human achievements, and in the midst of Italy’s greatest need.

“ The captains who followed him with love and veneration, blaming fortune and his temerity for their loss, spoke of age ripened to bear fatigue, sufficient and apt for every difficulty. They sighed over the greatness of his thoughts and the wildness of his valour, they could not control their voices in remembering the good fellowship which made them his companions and, not forgetting his foresight and acuteness, they warmed with the fire of their complaints the snow which was falling heavily while they carried him to Mantua. . . .”

Then Aretino carries on the story as an eyewitness ; and we have no reason to doubt the absolute accuracy of his famous letter, as his affection for Giovanni delle Bande Nere seems to have been the one true

sentiment of this vagabond scholar, the witty inspirer of Pasquino, the "Scourge of Princes."

"Then the Duke of Urbino came to him and said, seeing the situation, 'It is not enough for you to be great and glorious in arms if you do not also distinguish your name by religion under whose sacraments we are born.' And he, understanding that these words meant the last confession, answered: 'As I have done my duty in all things, if need be I will do it in this also.' Then when the Duke went out, he set himself to talk with me, calling for Sire Antonio with great affection. And when I said that we would send for him: 'Do you want,' he answered, 'a man like him to leave the field of war to see sick men?'

"Then he remembered the Count of San Secondo [his nephew], saying: 'I wish he were here to take my place.' Sometimes he scratched his head with his finger, sometimes he laid it upon his lips, saying: 'What will happen?' Often repeating: 'I have nothing to repent of.'

"Then, by the wishes of the doctors, I went to him and said: 'It would be an insult to your soul if I tried to persuade you that death is the cure of ills, made heavy only by our fears. But because it is the highest happiness to do everything with free will, let them cut off the leg broken by the artillery and in eight days you will be able to make of Italy, now a slave, a queen. And your lameness will serve instead of the royal order you have always refused to wear on your neck, because wounds and the loss of limbs are the medals of the friends of Mars.'

"'Let them do it,' he answered, 'at once.' At

this moment the doctors came in and praising the firmness of his resolution, ended their services for the night and, after giving him medicine, went to put their instruments in order. It was already the hour to eat when he was taken by violent nausea. Then he said to me: 'The signs of Cæsar! I must think of something else than life.' And with hands joined, he made a vow to go to the Apostle of Galatia [San Jacopo of Compostella]. But when the time was come and the skilful men came in with their instruments, they asked for eight or ten assistants to hold him while the terrible sawing lasted.

"He smiled and said: 'Twenty couldn't hold me.' Then got ready with a perfectly calm face, and took the candle in his hand to light the doctors himself. I ran out and closing my ears heard only two cries, and then he called me. When I came to him he said: 'I am cured.' And turning himself all around, made a great rejoicing about it. If the Duke of Urbino had not stopped him, he would have had them bring in the foot, with the pieces of his leg to look at, laughing at us because we could not bear to look at what he had suffered. And his sufferings were far greater than those of Alexander, and of Trajan, who kept a smiling face when the tiny arrow-head was pulled out.

"But finally, the pain which had left him returned two hours before day with all sorts of torments. I heard him knocking hastily on the wall of the room. The sound stabbed me to the heart, and getting dressed, in an instant I ran to him. As soon as he saw me, he commenced to say that the thought of cowards gave him more disgust than pain, trying by thus gossiping with me to set free, by disregarding

his misfortunes, his spirit tangled in the pains of death. But as day dawned, things grew so much worse that he made his will, in which he divided many thousands of scudi in money and stuff among those who had served him and left only four julii for his burial. The Duke was his executor. Then he turned in most Christian mood to his last confession, and seeing the friar come: 'Father,' he said, 'being a professor of arms, I have lived with the habits of soldiers as I should have lived like the monks if I had put on the dress you wear. Were it allowed, I would confess before every one, for I have never done anything unworthy of myself.'

"At last he turned to me, ordering me to have his wife send Cosimo to him. At that, death which was calling him to the under world doubled his sadness. Already the whole household without any thought of the respect due to rank, swarmed round the bed, mingled with his chief officers and, shadowed with a cold melancholy, wept for the living hope and the service which they were losing with their Master, each trying to catch his eye with a glance of theirs to show their sorrow and love. Thus surrounded, he took the hand of the Duke, saying: 'You are losing to-day the greatest friend and the best servant you have ever had.'

"His Excellency, masking his face and tongue with the appearance of false joy, tried to make him believe he would get well. And he, who was not frightened by death even when he was certain of it, began to talk to the Duke about the result of the war, saying things that would have been wonderful had he been in full health instead of on the point of death. So he remained working with his mind until almost

the ninth hour of the night of the vigil of St. Andrew. And because his suffering was very great, he begged me to put him to sleep by reading to him. I did so, and he seemed to sink away from sleep to sleep. At last waking after fifteen minutes' dozing, he said: 'I dreamed I was making my will, and here I am cured. If I keep on getting better like this, I will teach the Germans how to make war and show them how I avenge myself.' Even as he said this, the lamp of his spirit which deceived his eyes, began to yield to the perpetual darkness. Wherefore of his own accord he asked for the Extreme Unction.

"Having received the Sacrament, he said: 'I will not die amongst all these poultices.' So we fixed a camp bed and placed him on it and there, while his mind slept, death took him." *

The whole scene of this terrible drama rises before us like a vivid picture. The marvellous fortitude, the supreme power of will, the splendid courage of the dying hero are almost beyond belief. We see the naïve detachment of youth in his eagerness to make his will—this princely Medici of twenty-eight, who had spent a fortune on his soldiers and who, after ten years of fighting, has little to leave beyond ambitious hopes and treacherous promises.

The full text of that curious document is before me, with its long rigmarole of a preface giving the full names and titles of all the noble witnesses. It begins thus:

"In the Name of Christ, so be it!

"In the Year of our Lord . . . 1526, Thursday, the twenty-ninth of November; in the time of the Most

* Aretino: *Lettere*, vol. i., 5-9.

Serene Prince and Emperor the Lord Charles, by the Divine grace and clemency of God, King of the Romans and ever Augustus. At Mantua, in the Palace of the Most Illustrious and Most Excellent Lord Luigi da Gonzaga, Marquis, etc. . . . there being present . . . ”; and then follow the full names and titles of the Duke of Urbino, the Marquis Luigi Gonzaga, and others, including the doctor and the notary himself, who duly take oath upon the Holy Gospels, etc.

“At present, the Most Illustrious Lord Giovanni, son of the late most Illustrious Lord, another Giovanni dei Medici of Florence, Captain of the Army etc. being clear in mind, sense and intellect, although infirm in body, lying in his bed, considering the misfortune of human nature, its fragility and weakness, and that nothing is more certain than death or more uncertain than the hour; not wishing to die intestate . . . has made his will in these terms and declared :

“First indeed his soul, when parted from his body, he piously and devoutly recommends to Almighty God and to the Blessed and Glorious Virgin-Mother Mary, and to all the Celestial Court ;

“Next, he has wished, ordered, disposed and left by will, the Most Illustrious Lady Maria, wife of the said Lord, the Testator, as Guardian and legitimate administrator of the son and heir of the said Testator. in everything and for everything . . . ” and so on.

But at this point the honest Giovanni has suddenly interfered and insisted upon asserting his wishes in plain Italian, that there may be no mistake upon the subject, and he dictates thus :

“That the Lady his wife is to be sole guardian and Executor for her son Cosimo, his universal heir

. . . but that neither she nor her son are to bring any legal action against the servants of the Testator . . . otherwise all the goods will go to the Hospice of the Innocents at Florence. And that the Lord Jacopo Salviati and Madonna Lucrezia are not to be guardians of the goods or of the son ; and the Testator prays His Holiness our Lord the Pope to treat his servants well ; and he makes free gift of all such goods as furniture, horses and money described to his servants ; and on this subject has left the division of them to his friend (the Duke of Urbino) . . . and he prays the Lord to take under His protection Cosimo his son, with the permission of His Holiness our Lord the Pope, to whom he commends Cosimo most strongly. . . .” Then the Will continues for another page of Latin scrawling, in which the Notary has his own way unmolested.

The little incident of our warrior’s confession is very striking, as showing his simple naïve faith in his own righteousness, and his perfect confidence that the Almighty, as the God of battles, thoroughly understood and approved of all his warlike exploits. This attitude of mind recalls to us the words of another rough soldier—La Hire—who, in 1423, when on the way to a desperate adventure—the relief of Montargis—met a priest and begged for absolution. When bidden to confess his sins, La Hire replied : “ I have no time, for I am in haste to attack the English ; moreover I have but done as all soldiers are wont to do.”

The priest having reluctantly consented to this uncanonical act and given him absolution, La Hire knelt down by the wayside and prayed thus : “ Mon



Brogi, photo.

Bronzino : Florence.

COSIMO I., GRAND DUKE OF TUSCANY.

Dieu, I beseech Thee to do this day for La Hire that which Thou wouldest have La Hire do for Thee if he were God and Thou wert La Hire." With a conscience at rest, he then continued his journey, made a fierce onslaught on the English, and forced them to raise the siege of Montargis.

The death of Giovanni delle Bande Nere took place on the night of November 29, in the year 1526, when, having made his peace with God and the world, he passed away from the scene of his strenuous life, at the age of twenty-eight. He was buried on the morrow, with all the pomp and splendour of a great military funeral. In the full array of a warrior, with plumed helmet, cuirass, and complete armour, he was borne by the most gallant captains of his Black Bands to his tomb in the Church of San Domenico in Mantua, which he had himself chosen. With trailing banners and muffled drums, the sad procession passed on through the silent streets, headed by the Duke of Urbino, the Marquis of Mantua, all the Gonzaga family, princes, nobles, soldiers, and citizens—all crowding to do the last honours to the famous hero, the hope of Italy.

Not until many years had passed and his descendants had long been the despots of Florence, would his remains be moved from the peaceful Sacristy of San Domenico at Mantua, to take their due place amongst the sepulchral monuments of the Medici in his native city.

"He is dead—a force of Nature. He is finished—the example of an antique faith. He is gone—the right arm of battles!" mourns Aretino, and his cry of despair rings throughout the land. Guicciardini was deeply moved: "Let us pray God that He may take pity on the soul of the Lord Giovanni, since

He was not willing that we should make use of so much valour in this, the greatest need that we shall ever have. . . . We have lost the Lord Giovanni, full of such valour and courage that on him we placed all our hopes. . . . We have the universe against us, and we are alone ! ”

Even the cold Machiavelli, to whom a dead prince was of little value, wrote to the Eight of Florence : “ Your Lordships will have heard of the death of the Lord Giovanni, whose loss causes universal regret.”

Lamentations echoed beyond the bounds of Italy, for François I. sent word to Salviati at Rome ; “ I have felt all possible sorrow for the death of the Lord Giovanni, both for the sake of the Pope and my own, for I loved the prince greatly.”

Pope Clement sent a brief to the widowed Maria Salviati on December 4, lamenting this “ monstrous misfortune,” and full of vague promises for her son, while the Bishop of Arezzo assured her that Giovanni “ had died more gloriously than any other man of his race and country.”

Thus mourned the friends and also the faithful servants of the dead hero, and we feel with them that the loss of Giovanni delle Bande Nere was irreparable in that hour of deadly peril. “ Had he but lived,” who knows whether, by supreme and tremendous efforts, the motley horde which was pouring over Italy might not have been arrested and driven back ? And even in that last awful moment, when the enemy was at the very gates of Rome, how can we tell that a leader like Giovanni might not have roused the Papal Army within the walls, stimulated to strength and courage the timid citizens,

and so saved the Eternal City from the leaderless and disorganised host ?

If the death of Giovanni was so great a disaster for his country, what shall we say of the loss to his wife—to Maria Maddalena Romola—the sympathetic companion of his childhood, the loving wife of his youth, the devoted helpmate and champion of those following years of contest and struggle ? Maria had never failed him—through sunshine and storm, through his fleeting hours of devotion, his long months of careless neglect, she was ever steadfast and true. This was the crushing mishap—the end of all things ; the constant dread of her life, which had haunted her by night and day as she thought of his reckless valour. When Giovanni was in the field, his wife could never watch the approach of a messenger without seeing in him a bearer of evil tidings, without trembling and turning pale. As she says in one of her letters : “ The sound of footsteps is like a knife in my heart . . . ” ; thus forestalling her date of fear. And now that the blow had fallen, what would become of her ? Yet her sorrow is but the common lot of the soldier’s wife ; the price of war in every age.

In his brief life, so crowded with valiant deeds, the young condottiere had proved himself the true inheritor of the strong passions, the dauntless spirit, the ardent courage of his mother, Caterina Sforza, the great Madonna of Forli. It is difficult for us to realise this type of the mediæval warrior, in the very heart of the Renaissance. But if we stand in the Bargello of Florence, before the famous bust of Giovanni dei Medici—that masterpiece of San Gallo—we may catch some faint reflection of the rugged

strength and mighty personality of the great captain. We see him in no courtly tournament-suit, but in the rude heavy armour of his own Black Bands—his massive chest protected by a solid “carapace,” an enormous pauldron or “guard” covering the left shoulder like a shield; his bare head revealing the low broad forehead of the man of action, lined with anxious thought. As we gaze upon that face of tragic energy and power, we dimly feel that here is one who could leap on his horse with a wounded soldier in his arms, who could lead a forlorn hope to victory, and on his deathbed hold a torch to guide the surgeon’s knife.

Other memorials of Giovanni still exist, but, by some irony of fate, the great statue, with its massive pedestal, ordered of Bandinelli by the Grand Duke Cosimo for his father’s tomb, has found its way to the noisy crowded market-place of the Piazza di San Lorenzo. Here the hero of national legend seems to have settled down into his rightful place amongst the people of Florence, in their daily life. He is one of themselves, and in merry mood they sing :

Messer Giovanni delle Bande Nere
Del lungo cavalcar noiato e stanco,
Scese di Cavallo e si pose a sedere.

But the true monument which Giovanni left behind was his company of the Black Bands. This was the supreme work of his short life; his clear title to immortal fame. In these bands, as we have seen, every individual soldier was chosen and trained with ceaseless, untiring vigilance; sternly and laboriously brought to a perfection of discipline never before attained, and then treated with unheard-of

generosity by their captain, who spent his fortune on their pay and gave them freely all the spoils of war, keeping nothing for himself. All his captains distinguished themselves and became famous in their various posts, his last favourite—specially mentioned in his will—Luca Antonio Cuppano, being made Governor of Piombino. The fame of the Black Bands lived for centuries, and won the admiring praise of the greatest generals of later days. The most famous condottiere of the Renaissance needs no other monument.



PART II

A FEW WORDS OF INTRODUCTION

It had been my first intention to close the story of Giovanni delle Bande Nere on the tragic note of his untimely death. But on further thought I see that the dramatic interest of this work would be greatly increased by carrying on the tale and pointing out the striking contrast between Giovanni and his son Cosimo—both in their character and their life. As we have seen with regard to this warrior Medici, to whom battle was the very joy of his being, the result of all his valiant deeds was but empty fame and splendid failure, when he was struck down on that Mantuan plain by the new artillery which he had hated and despised.

The same may be said of his mother, Caterina Sforza, the Madonna of Forli; all her gallant life of fierce struggle and conflict was destined to end in defeat and exile.

But the boy Cosimo, the cold-hearted, silent, unnatural son of Giovanni dei Medici and Maria Salviati, was to meet with a far different fate. He was to reap where his father and his ancestors had sown; he was to pass unscathed through perils in which his kinsmen fell around him; in his one person he

was to combine all the savage instincts of the Sforza with the mean prudent vices derived from the diplomatic Medici, whose race he was to crown with their highest triumph when he should be proclaimed Cosimo I., First Grand Duke of Tuscany.

Where the father had fought with gallant spirit and courage, fiercely and successfully, to forward the aims of Pope or King—often without reward, not even receiving the pay for his soldiers; giving to them all the spoils of war; setting prisoners free without ransom—the son was to fight for himself, with crafty intrigue, with deadly weapons of perfidy and secret crime, and to win thereby his own advancement—the highest dignity ever acquired by a layman of Florence. Where war had been for Giovanni the passionate pursuit of his life, moulding and tempering him by sternest discipline until he became like a polished blade of Damascus to serve the cause he adopted, war to Cosimo was to be merely a means to his own private advantage—when he put on an inlaid cuirass over his embroidered coat, wore a plumed helmet, and rode a showy war-horse—for the destruction of his rivals and the enslaving of his country. While the captain of the Black Bands was a born sportsman and soldier—whose earliest instinct was to hunt and pursue, until he learnt to wield the sword, to pierce with the lance and crush with the mace, to lead the sortie, to scale the fortress—his son and successor had reverted to another type, and carried his instinct of crafty diplomacy and cold-blooded intrigue far beyond the extreme limits of even Machiavellian policy.

The history of Cosimo I. is the more interesting to trace out and follow, as it appears to be little

known, for all the familiar historians of Florence usually come to an end on reaching the downfall of the Republic.* I have been far afield to seek for materials in the original contemporary chronicles, which require to be carefully sifted amongst the mass of documents written by the crowd of flatterers who hung round the Courts of the Grand Dukes of Tuscany.

The whole story of the rise and progress of this remote scion of the house of Medici to the first position in the State, is one of absorbing interest, and throws the most curious sidelights on the state of society, and the manners and customs of Italy in this, the latter end of the Renaissance.

* As Roscoe says: "The Florentine historians, as if unwilling to perpetuate the records of their subjugation, have almost invariably closed their labours with the fall of the Republic."

CHAPTER XIII

Concerning Maria Salviati, the widow of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and Cosimo his son—After Giovanni's death—Cosimo sent to Venice for safety, with his tutor Riccio—The child's education—Maria shows her gratitude to her husband's friends—Revolution in Florence against the Medici.

MARIA SALVIATI was at Florence, in her palace on the Corso, when the news of Giovanni's death reached her. At length the blow had fallen—the disaster which she had so long foreseen and dreaded; but no previous foreboding of evil could break the shock of grief. She had lost her warrior husband, the one love of her life; in the flower of his prime he had been taken from her; she was alone to face the world for herself and their child. The young widow—she was only twenty-seven—shut herself up in her darkened chamber, hung with black, and would see no one; but she gave strict orders that her boy Cosimo, then barely seven and a half, was not to be told the terrible news of his father's death.

Letters of condolence soon came in from every side, full of laments for the loss of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and of promises of help for his young son. The Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria, wrote that he was seeking to obtain from the King of France the company of light horsemen, of which her husband had command, for the young Cosimo. But this letter only added to her anxiety, for would not the

next step be for the King of France to demand the presence of Cosimo, that he might be brought up at the French Court ?

Next came the respectful homage and condolence of the captains of the Black Bands, praying that she would suffer the young Signor Cosimo, the son of their beloved lord, to be brought up in their midst to take his father's place some day. It only needed this, to drive poor Maria nearly wild with anxiety and terror. She could refuse it to-day, but what new demand of friend or enemy might come to her on the morrow ? Her boy, the only comfort she had left, would be stolen from her ; she was certain of it ! Something must be done at once ; there was not a moment to lose.

The Princess Maria sent in haste for Messer Pietro Francesco Riccio, her son's tutor. The boy must leave Florence at once ; he was not safe there for another hour. The subject was discussed, and the mother suggested the Villa of Castello, but Messer Riccio argued that if Cosimo was not safe in Florence, no other place in the territory of the Republic was a sure refuge for him. Would not Venice be a suitable place—that hospitable city which, like an inn, received exiles from all countries, who remained in security so long as they did nothing to offend the State ? It is quite possible that the tutor thought it would be much less dull for himself in the gay life of Venice than in a villa in the country.

Thus matters were at length settled. Madonna Maria, in her deep mourning, could not travel, and she must spend several months in retreat in her favourite convents near Florence, where she would have masses said for the repose of her dear lord's

soul, and pray for him. Meantime, Messer Riccio was to depart at once to Castello with Cosimo, who was often sent into the country for his health, and would make no difficulty. Then, as soon as an escort was provided and other arrangements made, the tutor and his charge would continue their journey to Venice. At this time, the end of the year 1526, Maria Salviati had another reason for anxiety about her son's remaining in the city, for those terrible landsknechte, under Frundsberg, were on their way into Italy, and it was greatly feared that Florence would be their first point of attack; already many of the chief inhabitants were preparing to leave if necessary.

So little Cosimo was taken to the Villa of Castello, where he met his old friend Fortunati, who took care that he should have plenty of amusement, such as catching little birds in nets and playing with his dogs and riding his pony. The old priest's affection for Giovanni dei Medici had been carried on to his son, and it was with a sad heart he took leave of the boy and went back to "la Topaia," the villa on the hill above Castello, which was given to him later and where he ended his days.

The little prince, with his tutor Riccio and an escort of Florentines, now set forth on horseback for his journey through the Mugello and the mountains beyond, resting at Cafaggiolo, at Marradi, and at Faenza before reaching Ravenna. From that ancient city they embarked in a rude flat-bottomed boat, of the primitive kind, which from time immemorial had been used for crossing the shallow lagoons of Comacchio, until they arrived in the dominion of the Duke of Ferrara. His friendship

for the Medici was more than doubtful, and the travellers made but a short stay at Volano, resting for the night at the rich Benedictine Abbey of Pomposa. In crossing a patch of marshy ground, a slight mischance befell: the horse, on which Cosimo was riding in front of a groom, stumbled and fell in the mud, and the bridle was broken, but nothing worse came of it. The boy was very much annoyed, and in writing to his mother took care to deny that anything of the kind had happened. The next day the party had to take to the River Po and the sea again, to the great alarm of some of their Florentine followers, but they all arrived without further adventure at Chioggia. From thence, after a change of boats, they passed along that shining highway of the sea, through the lagoons which seemed to stretch to the horizon and, through the smooth waterway, they reached the fair city of Venice in safety.

Here the exiles took up their abode in the palace called later the Casa Cappella, in the Contrada of Santa Maria, Mater Domini, "with a large and beautiful garden"; the whole, we are told, hired by Messer Riccio for twelve ducats and a half. When they were safely established here the tutor carried out the directions which he had received from his mistress. He took his pupil into a room apart, and solemnly informed him of the death of his father, with full official details. Cosimo listened in silence, with frigid attention, and replied calmly: "Well, I thought it was so." He did not allude to the subject again, but it was noticed that he was more reserved and haughty in manner than usual.

For the sake of his father, who had died fighting on the side of Venice, the boy received a warm

welcome, and was entertained with a magnificent banquet and gorgeous entertainments. This child of seven and a half was even admitted to sit in the great Council of the Republic on February 1, and he is said to have behaved with the utmost dignity, as though such honours were his by right. A clever, handsome boy, with all the prestige of his family and antecedents, Cosimo was made much of by the fair ladies of Venice ; he and the tutor having a very gay, pleasant time in that city of sunshine and enjoyment. Unlike his father, who hated books and whose taste was all for out-door sports, the boy early appreciated the importance of learning, and devoted himself with exemplary industry to his studies. His mother, Maria Salviati, had always taken the greatest interest in his lessons, and had most carefully chosen his teachers. Of course, in after-days, the flattering chroniclers of his Court tried to make him out an infant prodigy of learning ; still there seems to be no doubt that in Latin, for instance, he acquired enough sound knowledge to enable him to converse easily in later life in that language, with the ambassadors and foreigners who sought his presence.

We are told that he studied Roman history with special interest, and possibly the examples of ancient tyranny and perfidy were not lost upon the precocious child. Meantime his mother was not too much engrossed in her devotions and her conventual life to keep careful watch over him from afar. Every week she received one or two letters with regard to his progress and well-being, and the boy seems to have written frequently to Fortunati to inquire about his belongings at Castello. He required the most precise

answers to all his questions, and was particularly anxious that the kind priest should "keep a good store of thrushes for him in cages, and that they should be well fattened and ready for his return." At his age, this was a curiously practical and by no means sentimental view to take of the poor thrushes! They were of a very special kind, the "tordi," fed on scented berries and thought worthy of a sonnet by Machiavelli.

Meantime the little prince flourished and grew fat himself in that peaceful life, probably much less strenuous and exacting in the absence of his mother who, with her passionate affection and nervous temperament, must have been always rather difficult to live with. We hear of an adventure which befell him one day when he was playing in the "beautiful garden," a rare and choice addition to a Venetian palace. He fell into the adjoining canal, and not being much of a swimmer, was in serious danger, when one of the young cousins who shared his home in Venice, Signora Luisa d'Appiano, rushed to his assistance, caught him by his hair, and held him until a passing friar waded into the deep water and brought him safely ashore. It is mentioned as a proof of Cosimo's noble heart that in the days to come, when he was Grand Duke of Florence, he obtained for this friar a bishopric from the Pope. There may have been a touch of vanity in this act of belated gratitude, everything pertaining to his precious self being of supreme importance to the mighty prince. We are tempted to wonder whether he slapped the little girl for pulling his hair. She was a daughter of Maria Salviati's sister Eléna, who married Giacomo V. of Appiano, Lord of Piombino.

Lorenzino and Giuliano dei Medici, the sons of Piero Francesco dei Medici and Maria Soderini, a cousin of Maria's, appear to have been educated for some time with Cosimo, but he loved them none the better for that, as we shall see in days to come.

The generous-hearted, loving Maria could refuse nothing to her kindred who, in the troubled state of Florence at that time, were only too thankful to find a safe haven for their children. The poor widowed mother felt terribly this long separation from her beloved Cosimo, yet she remained on in her convents until, on April 26, 1527, she opened with great state her deserted Villa of Castello, to receive, with the utmost honour, Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino, the Provviditore of Venice, and other old friends and companions in arms of her husband's. They had fought with him in that last fatal war; they had stood by his death-bed and been pitiful witnesses of his heroic fortitude and agony, and we wonder how they softened the tragic story to meet the ear of the woman who loved him. She could not do enough to show her gratitude, and the magnificence of her reception was long remembered at Castello. The Duke had only come with a small company in attendance, for the bulk of the army was awaiting him at Barberino, in the Mugello, made famous by the poem of the great Lorenzo dei Medici, "*La Nencio da Barbarino*."

Did Maria keep a record of that eventful meeting, and write down all that she heard concerning her beloved Giovanni? We know that one of her first thoughts, when the news of her widowhood reached her, was to have his story recorded, beginning with the first fourteen years of his life, when she felt that



Brogi, photo.

Bronzino : Florence.

COSIMO I., GRAND DUKE OF TUSCANY.

she had been a mother to the boy (a year older than herself), “had brought him up, and recognised in him the signs which foretold his magnanimous and unconquered soul, and all that he has so gloriously accomplished.”

There was now nothing to keep the Princess Maria any longer away from her son, and she at once made preparations for her journey to Venice. She had every reason to hasten her departure from Florence, which was in a desperate condition, with the hostile army of Frundsburg and the friendly troops under the Duke of Urbino both devastating her territory. A siege had seemed imminent, but on the approach of the Papal forces the landsknechte had moved on towards Rome. However, the coming of the Duke of Urbino hastened the domestic crisis, in this way. Silvio Passerini, Cardinal of Cortona—who governed the city since 1524, in the name of Pope Clement VII.—in company with Ippolito and Alessandro went out to visit the Papal camp, and a rumour immediately spread that the Medici had fled. The cry of “Popolo e Libertà!” rang through the streets, and the citizens took possession of the Palazzo Vecchio. The Cardinal at once returned with a strong force of the Duke of Urbino’s troops, and would have stormed the Palazzo, but Francesco Guicciardini—the historian—induced the people to come to terms. “You have the doves in the dove-cote, wring their necks,” was the advice given to the Cardinal of Cortona; but he was a timid man, and only inflicted a few fines.

This outbreak showed the state of popular feeling, and it was not long before matters became far more serious. When the news of the capture of Rome

and the captivity of the Pope reached Florence, the people rejoiced, and resolved to throw off the yoke of the Medici which they had so unwillingly endured. All the chief citizens presented themselves before the Cardinal of Cortona, and requested him to leave the city, with the two bastard Medici—Ippolito and Alessandro—of whom he had the charge. However, it required the strong intervention of Filippo Strozzi and his high-spirited wife Clarice, of the elder Medici branch—who despised all these illegitimate scions, from the Pope downwards—before Passerini could understand that his fall was inevitable. It was not until May 17, that the cardinal and the two boys were escorted out of the city, and Niccolò Capponi was appointed to the chief authority, under the name of Gonfalonier. Thus took place the bloodless revolution which preceded another act in the drama of Florentine government.

CHAPTER XIV

Anecdote of Cosimo's childhood—His mother, Maria Salviati, joins him at Venice—Sack of Rome, 1527—A catastrophe for all the Medici—Plague at Florence—Maria and Cosimo at the Trebbio—Their narrow escape and flight—Charles V. crowned Emperor at Bologna, 1530.

THE violence of feeling in Florence against the Medici had made the departure of Madonna Maria Salviati almost as abrupt as a flight. She was greatly distressed at the expulsion of the Cardinal of Cortona, who had always been a great friend of hers and had taken a special interest in little Cosimo. He liked to have the child frequently at his palace, and on one occasion, about a year before, a curious incident had happened. Cardinal Passerini had matters of state importance to discuss with the two Medici Princes who were in his charge—Ippolito, who was supposed to have been the son of Giuliano dei Medici, Duke of Nemours, and Alessandro, whose birth was still more doubtful. He was reputed to be the son of the late Lorenzo dei Medici, Duke of Urbino, but the affection shown him by Clement VII. gave strength to the general opinion that the Pope was his father. In any case his mother was a mulatto slave, and Alessandro had the dark skin, thick lips, and curly hair of a negro.

These two promising youths were in deep conversation with the Cardinal, when it was suddenly noticed

that little Cosimo had been present in the chamber all the time. Passerini sought to make amends for his carelessness by causing the child, who was about six years old, to solemnly promise that he would never repeat a word of anything he had heard. When he went home his mother asked him why he had been away so long, and what he had done. Cosimo replied that he had promised not to tell anything which he had heard or seen at the cardinal's palace. This naturally excited Maria's curiosity, and as he persisted in his silence, she at length lost her temper, and the old chronicler, Manucci, declares that she gave him a "guanciata" (a box on the ear!). Great capital was made of this story in the days of Cosimo's greatness. He was compared to the Roman boy Papirio, who would not reveal to his mother what had been said in the senate. At least we perceive one thing: that from his earliest years the young prince was learning the value of silence as an accomplishment.

Before Maria reached Venice she heard the news of the terrible disaster which had befallen Rome, and of the imprisonment of Pope Clement VII., for which his own vacillation and perfidy had so long prepared the way. Maria Salviati wrote the Holy Father a letter of condolence, which came from her heart; for what indeed was to become of her as well as the other Medici, if no help could come to them from Rome. The poor lady was greatly worried and distressed, for living in Venice was very expensive; ready money was constantly required for everything, and she knew not where to procure those necessary gold crowns.

As time passed on, matters became worse, for there

was a most serious outbreak in Florence of the plague which had been threatening for some years. As Machiavelli, who was an eyewitness, wrote :

“ Our Florence is like a town which has been sacked by infidels. Its streets, once so clean and beautiful and the resort of rank and fashion, are reeking with filth, and so crowded with wretches crying for aid, . . . that to walk in them is difficult and alarming. Shops are shut, work has ceased, courts of justice are gone, law is powerless, theft and murder are rife. The squares and markets, once thronged with citizens, are now graveyards or dens of thieves. Men walk alone, and there are no more friendly greetings—only meetings between the plague-stricken. Kinsman shuns kinsman ; brother, brother ; the wife, her husband ; and, worse still, fathers and mothers abandon their little ones.”

We are told that when the citizens were summoned by the Priori to the Grand Council, only about ninety ventured to appear, and they sat as far away from each other as possible, to avoid the risk of contagion.

Cosimo's mother found herself reduced to great straits, for she could have nothing sent from her palace in Florence, or even from the Villa of Castello. All the baggage was subject to a most rigorous examination, for the Customs of Venice were in terrible fear of contagion, and nothing was admitted from Florence. All the papers and letters of this period have evidently passed through fire, vinegar, and other disinfectants, for they are mutilated with stains and half burnt.

Maria Salviati kept up a constant correspondence with her old friend Fortunati, sometimes dictating

her letters to Riccio the tutor, but often writing "with her own hand" when she was in her most bitter mood of complaint and recrimination. Poor Fortunati, in his hill refuge at Topaia, must have had a trying time when, after the escape of Clement VII. from Rome, the hungry tribe of the Medici once more claimed the Pope's help and support. Maria can scarcely find words strong enough to urge her pressing need of money. Again and again she urges Fortunati to put forward her importunate demands :

"If you were a true friend you might persuade His Holiness to provide us, Cosimo and myself, with a suitable pension in order that we might be able to live without plaguing him in this way every day. Do remind him that it is now a whole month since I have received a denaro; that I have been obliged to pawn everything that I have, all my chains even, and that I have nothing left to offer as security. . . . For in short, after all, I am the niece of a Pope Clement, the wife of a Lord Giovanni, and that I should be reduced to beg like this! . . ."

She writes later to another friend that "her poor son is at the point of famine, overwhelmed with misfortunes, so that he needs help from Heaven to deliver him from his troubles."

Meantime Florence was carrying on a republican form of government, under the difficult rule of Niccolò Capponi, the son of that Pietro Capponi who made the memorable reply to the insults of Charles VIII.: "If you sound your trumpets, we will ring our bells!" Although the people of Florence had thrown off the rule of the Medici, they still showed so much tolerance towards the family—their palaces

and goods being protected—that after nearly a year at Venice Maria Salviati thought it a safe and diplomatic plan to return to Florence when all fear of the plague was over. Still it was not a pleasant home-coming, for she was most indignant to find that the faction of the “Arrabiati” had pulled down the Medici arms from all the public buildings and destroyed the waxen effigies of the Medici in the Church of the Annunziata. Worse than this, most of her friends were in exile or held an inferior position, which the proud spirit of Giovanni’s widow could scarcely endure. Her only comfort was to devote herself with renewed energy to the education of her young son, on whom all her hopes were now centred.

The loving, impulsive mother never lost faith in her Cosimo’s ultimate greatness, for had it not been foretold by more than one augury? She could never forget that far-off day already alluded to, when Giovanni delle Bande Nere was riding home in triumph through the streets of Florence, and, looking up at his palace in the Corso, saw his infant son at the window, in the arms of his nurse. “Throw him down to me!” commanded the father, and catching the child in his arms, he spoke those prophetic words: “You will be a Prince one day; it is your fate!”

Then again, could it be a mere chance which had caused the joy-fires for Cosimo’s birth, lighted on the heights of the Trebbio, to be repeated and carried on from one hill-top to another, by Cesena, Faenza, and Ravenna, until from the bleak Mugello to the Adriatic, throughout the whole of Romagna, the summer sky was aflame with magnificent lights, rejoicing for some unknown triumph? Had not his future greatness

been foretold by astrologers, when they cast his horoscope, in the House of Capricorn ? At least his mother believed in him, worshipped him, gave her life entirely to him—was probably unwise and injudicious in her treatment from undisciplined affection—and all the time was preparing a sword to pierce her own heart. It was a curious and appropriate chance which had given him a Malatesta Baglioni as his godfather !

Florence was passing through a most troubled time within her walls, but we have not space to dwell upon the intrigues of the various factions. There was still more danger from without, as the Pope had never forgiven the expulsion of the Medici governor, and had now combined with the Emperor to reduce the rebellious city to submission. Michelangelo was entrusted in the year 1529 with the task of repairing the walls, towers, and bastions of Florence, and placing the fortifications in a state of thorough defence. When news arrived that an army had been collected under the command of Filiberto, Prince of Orange, for the express purpose of besieging Florence, many of the citizens left their homes to seek safety elsewhere, and among these were Madonna Maria Salviati and her son Cosimo. It was quite time for them to leave, for as members of the Medici family they were looked upon with suspicion, and were in danger of being made prisoners. They set forth at once for the fortified castle of Trebbio, which, situated high up on the hills of the Mugello, was always a delightful summer resort. There was a special reason for this flight. With her usual generosity, Maria kept open house here for other exiles from Florence who had occasion to dread the ill-feeling of those in

power. When this came to be known in the city, a secret Council was held and a certain Messer Otto da Montauta was sent with an armed force to the Mugello to seize the persons of the Illustrissima Signora Maria Salviati dei Medici and her son, Signor Cosimo—the lady, because she was the daughter of the Signor Jacopo Salviati who was in such great honour with the Pope, and the boy, as heir of the younger branch of the Medici.

Now Messer Otto had been one of the captains of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and so great were his affection and gratitude towards his former master that he could not bring himself to betray Giovanni's wife and child. It is not quite clear what steps he took—whether he went by another way, or whether he sent private information of his errand to Trebbio—but in any case, Maria had notice of the proposed attack in time to escape with Cosimo. They made their way across the hill-country and reached in safety Forli, the historic city of Caterina Sforza, the mother of Giovanni. We wonder how much interest Maria and her son took in the heroic story of old, and the famous Castello which had been the scene of such desperate conflicts? From Forli they went on to Imola, where they found a safe refuge with friends of the Medici in the Papal city.

But alas for the gallant captain who had so generously risked his post and his honour to save them! Messer Otto da Montauta, on his return to Florence, was tried for disobedience and treachery, cruelly tortured, and long confined in a dark prison.

The next that we hear about Madonna Maria and her son is the account by Ammirato of their presence at Bologna for the coronation of the Emperor

Charles V. Much had happened in Europe during the two years which had passed since the taking of Rome. That event, and the "Ladies' Peace" recently arranged at Cambray—August 1529—between the aunt of Charles V., Marguerite of Austria, and Louise, the mother of François I., had practically left the young Emperor of twenty-nine the arbiter of Europe. The King of France had sacrificed his two allies, Florence and Ferrara, to the Pope's vindictive vengeance, although Charles V., in his honest desire for universal peace, would gladly have spared them—as we see in all his private letters of the time.

Never had the ancient city of Bologna seen such a galaxy of princes, cardinals, and nobles from every land, to make a fit setting of magnificence for the great event which was to take place. The Pope would have chosen Rome for the august ceremony, but the Emperor, possibly influenced by warnings against the perfidy and treachery of the Pontiff, had expressed his wish for Bologna, and his word was law. Charles V. played so great a part in the future of Cosimo, and the story of his coronation is so interesting, that we will briefly tell it.

It was as early as November 1 that the Pope arrived at Bologna in state, wearing the triple tiara and borne on his chair of ceremony, with a train of sixteen cardinals. Charles V. made a triumphal entry four days later, with a magnificent array of light horsemen, artillery, engineers, companies of infantry—some with cross-bows, others with pikes and halberds—followed by Burgundian horse-soldiers in white armour, with velvet doublets of yellow, red, and green—each one followed by a page on horseback bearing his helmet and lance. After all this superb panoply

of war rode the magnificent company of nobles-in-waiting, and in their midst the great Emperor himself, clad in gold brocade and mounted on a beautiful white charger. The meeting between the two potentates was a stately pageant, which would need pages of description to do it justice.

To my mind the most striking feature was the ostentatious humility of the supreme monarch, who held the fate of Italy in his hand and on whose vast dominions the sun never set. How vividly the terrible past must have risen before the Pope's mind when his victorious foe made low obeisance at his feet! Did Clement VII. feel one pang of remorse for the double dealing which had brought destruction upon his country and his subjects? Probably not, for he showed no sign of repentance, and his whole heart was still set upon deadly vengeance against unhappy Florence, the native city of his race. Nothing would satisfy his cruel nature but to see the fair city of the Medici humbled in the dust; for when ambassadors from every other state and country were received with favour, the Emperor was not allowed even to admit the Florentine envoys to his presence. They returned home in despair to their beleaguered city, which the Prince of Orange had been ruthlessly bombarding since October, and whose case was hopeless, notwithstanding the desperate valour of the citizens.

Meantime the imposing ceremony of the Emperor's coronation took place in February 1530. On the 22nd he received from the hands of the Pope the iron crown of Monza, but the chief event was on February 24, the birthday of Charles V. and the anniversary of the victory of Pavia. Then, with

every circumstance of pomp and magnificence, the golden crown of Empire was placed on his head, while the heralds proclaimed him as "Emperor of the Romans and Lord of the whole world!" No tumult of acclamation, of trumpets and bells can add force to that proud title, bestowed in the midst of a galaxy of such magnificence as neither Mediæval nor Renaissance Italy ever assembled, before or since. If Ammirato's statement is correct as to the presence on this occasion of Maria Salviati and her son Cosimo, it must have been a scene which they never forgot. It was a great gathering of the Medici family, and Alessandro proudly carried the Banner of the Church in the procession.

During this period of exile, we have no very reliable account of their doings, but the next we hear of is their presence in Rome, where the Pope appears to have entrusted to Maria the charge of his young kinswoman, Catherine dei Medici. She was the daughter and heiress of Lorenzo dei Medici, Duke of Urbino, and her mother, Madeleine de Boulogne—of the royal family of France—died at her birth in 1519. Catherine was watched over with great interest by Clement VII., who fully intended to strengthen his influence by arranging some grand marriage for her. Various suitors were proposed. One was Guidobaldo, the infant son of Francesco Maria, Duke of Urbino, but the Pope aimed higher than this. James V. of Scotland was suggested at one time, but the reason Clement appears to have given for not considering this was "that the posts were so expensive to Scotland!" Meantime the little girl had been carefully brought up in the convent of the Murate, where the cell

appropriated to her was that once inhabited by another Catherine, the great Madonna of Forli. We are told that the Medici heiress was a quiet, docile child, and expressed the greatest desire to become a nun herself—indeed, that she wept bitterly when removed from her convent by her kinsman and guardian, Clement VII.

Catherine was the same age as her distant cousin Cosimo, and we are disposed to think that they were very much alike in character. She is said to have been very clever and well taught, and to have distinguished herself in Rome by her brilliant talk and repartee. She does not appear to have cared for her reputed half-brother Alessandro, but we are told that she was greatly attached to her handsome young cousin Ippolito. It may have been merely a coincidence, but when Pope Clement began to enter into negotiations with François I. for the marriage of Catherine with his second son Henri, a distant mission was found for Ippolito, who did not return from Turkey until the wedding was arranged.

Meantime the fate of Florence had been sealed ; the long and terrible siege had ended in the utter ruin of the popular and republican government, traitors within and without the city having destroyed their last hope of success. Just before the city surrendered, on August 12, 1530, the leader of the besieging army, the Prince of Orange, fell in the battle of Gavinana, on the slopes of the Apennines just above San Marcello. For some time the city was occupied by a strong guard of foreign mercenaries, and had to pay an indemnity of 80,000 gold florins, while all the exiled Medici were to be recalled. The Pope undertook the government, promising to for-

give all past injuries and to treat his countrymen with affection and clemency, "as he had always done!" As might have been expected, he kept no promises, and all the prominent men who had opposed him were put to death in various ways. One of the friars of San Marco, who had preached resistance to Papal authority, was starved to death in the Castle of S. Angelo. When the party of liberty had settled down to the quiet of despair, Clement sent Alessandro dei Medici, the mulatto, to Florence, where, on July 6, 1531, he was declared "Head of the Republic." The Signoria was abolished the next year, and Alessandro was created Gonfalonier for life. Henceforward Florence had to submit to "il governo d'un solo," which she had been fighting against for centuries. This was the way in which Pope Clement preserved her liberty.

CHAPTER XV

Alessandro dei Medici becomes Duke of Florence—Cosimo and his mother return home—Maria Salviati accompanies Caterina dei Medici to France for her marriage—Murder of Duke Alessandro by his cousin Lorenzino (1537)—Cosimo's diplomacy—He is elected to succeed Duke Alessandro as Lord of Florence.

It was not until the year 1533 that arrangements were made for the marriage of Catherine dei Medici, which had been practically settled two years before. At this date the young Prince Henri, second son of François I., was fifteen years of age, and his proposed bride was fourteen. Clement VII. paid Maria Salviati the compliment of requesting her to take charge of the young princess and escort her to France. Great preparations had been made for the event which, it was hoped, would cement the rather precarious alliance between the Pope and the King of France. With his usual diplomacy Clement had arranged that the city of Rome should provide money for the splendid trousseau, the very costly and generous supply of jewellery, and even the expenses of the wedding journey. Amongst the ornaments we find mentioned "a sapphire table, and a diamond cut 'en dos d'âne.'" There was also a magnificent necklace of pearls, which later came to another dauphine, Mary Stuart, and which was finally appropriated and worn by Queen Elizabeth of England.

A large income was to be settled upon the Princess Catherine in the land of her adoption, and the Medici Pope had promised her a dowry of 30,000 gold crowns, but very little of this sum was ever paid. Amongst her ladies-in-waiting there were some so young that they had to be accompanied by their governesses, and to add to the gorgeousness of effect, there were three Turkish maidens in Oriental costume. The wedding was to take place at Marseilles, and one part of the elaborate plan was that the Pope was to accompany his young relation and perform the ceremony. But when it came to the point, Clement felt very unwilling to undertake the long journey, and pleaded his age—he was only 55—his uncertain health, and the dust and discomfort of travel. However, motives of policy overcame his reluctance, and he set forth in great state by sea with a splendid wedding party. The young Cardinal Ippolito had been recalled from Turkey to take part in the expedition, in order to silence any awkward gossip about the bride's affection for him. He appears to have been received with special favour by the King of France, who offered him various costly gifts, but the prudent cardinal would only accept a "young Barbary lion," which he took back to Florence with him and presented to the city to be kept with the other lions in the Serraglio, still remembered as the "Via dei Leoni."

François I. was also most courteous and friendly to the Princess Maria Salviati, whom he honoured as the widow of the great condottiere Giovanni dei Medici, who had died fighting in his service. The King inquired after her son Cosimo, whom he invited to his Court, promising great office and emolument.



Anderson, photo.

Allori: Prado, Madrid.

GARZIA DEI MEDICI, SON OF COSIMO I.

But Maria never for one moment seriously entertained the idea of parting with her son on any condition, and she was probably experienced enough in the ways of princes to take all these vague promises at their true value.

The wedding was celebrated with great pomp, but we can imagine that the boy-and-girl bridal pair were somewhat bored as they stood together afterwards, hand in hand on a carpet of gold brocade, listening to long orations from Hymen, and to nuptial songs in their honour, delivered by classical nymphs. We cannot help feeling some pity for the clever girl Caterina, finding herself mated to a sulky boy, who could rarely be induced to speak a word to her or to anybody else. She had evidently taken her future life very seriously, for we are told that she had written beforehand to King François, asking if she might receive lessons in dancing at Marseilles in the French style, so as to be able to take her part suitably at the royal Court. The young princess had a trying time before her for some years, as the Italians were not popular in France, and the general indignation at the non-payment of her dowry was largely visited upon her. But she was wise in her generation: she could hold her peace and bide her time; and when her day of power came she could seize and enjoy a triumphant vengeance.

In all these points the character and life of Catherine greatly resembled that of her far-off cousin Cosimo. He too, at the same age of fourteen, was becoming an adept in diplomacy. He never made an enemy if he could avoid it; he was always subservient to those in authority, and knew how to worm himself in their favour. When, during his stay in Rome,

Pope Clement had objected to his wearing the garb of a soldier, fearing that this might recall too vividly his father's greatness, Cosimo willingly submitted, on his return to Florence, to wear the ordinary dress of a citizen; but on the death of the Pope a few years later—in 1534—after his time of mourning he cast it aside. We hear much of his humble devotion towards his kinsman, the ruling lord of Florence, Alessandro, who honoured him with his favour. The chroniclers also dwell fully upon the youth's assiduous devotion to study, giving most of his time to "letters and humanities, and devoting the remaining hours to perfecting himself in the art of war, in riding, and in the study of music, wherein he became greatly proficient, being able to play on various stringed instruments, and to sing."

It must have seemed almost like old times to his mother, Maria Salviati, when she was back in her own palace in Florence in December of 1533, with the Medici all recalled from exile and her old friends around her. But the temper of the people towards her family was secretly more bitter than ever, from very hopelessness—their freedom was gone for ever. As a symbol of this we notice that, by order of Alessandro, "La Campana" was taken down and broken in pieces, "lest its sound should awaken echoes of lost liberty." The last knell tolled on October 1, 1532, and it marked the close of the city's greatness. "The liberties of a free people and a free Parliament were buried in the grave of the Republic of Florence."

The young Prince Cosimo was rewarded for his meek subserviency. When Alessandro went to Naples to meet the Emperor Charles V., who had recently conquered Barbarossa and gained the city

of Tunis, he took his cousin with him. Their errand was an important one, as the exiles who had been driven from Florence, on the accession to power of Alessandro and the Medici, had gone to the Emperor with bitter complaints of the way in which they were persecuted and their country trodden down. Apparently Alessandro was able to justify his conduct to the satisfaction of Charles V., for he returned to Florence in higher favour than ever. Cosimo went back to his riding and his singing, and to his diligent study, not only of books but of men, which was to be so useful to him in the coming years. The young Cardinal Ippolito had also started for Naples to appeal against Alessandro, but he and his two companions died in agony on the way, and no one doubted that they had been poisoned.

There could have been no more undesirable intimacy for young Cosimo than that of his cousin Alessandro, whose private life was one of shameful wickedness and self-indulgence, which made him hateful to the people. By the Treaty of Barcelona, in July 1529, he had the great good fortune to be promised in marriage the illegitimate daughter of Charles V., Marguerite, then a child of eight years old. She was to be conducted to Naples and well educated until she was twelve years old, and then the wedding was to take place and she was to receive a dowry of 20,000 gold scudi. It has been suggested that the Emperor yielded this concession with the idea of making some amends to the Pope for the terrible disaster and world-wide scandal of the sack of Rome. Charles V. could know nothing of the young man's character; he only looked upon him as the Pope's favourite nephew and the heir of his branch of the Medici.

The other cousin, Ippolito, was ineligible for this honour, having been made cardinal at the age of eighteen. After this marriage had taken place—on February 28, 1536—Alessandro was naturally high in the favour of the Emperor, who, as we have seen, turned a deaf ear to the complaints made against him. This was how it happened that poor little Marguerite, who had been adopted in infancy and carefully brought up by the great Marguerite of Austria, Regent of the Netherlands, found herself in Florence as the wife of the notorious Alessandro. One good point may be put down to his credit: he had a taste for planting and horticulture, and it was he who converted the river-mud and sand-banks of the Arno into the shady Cascine, now such an adornment to the city; and he also caused trees and shrubs to be grown on many farm lands in the neighbourhood.

Once more Alessandro and Cosimo went together to meet the Emperor at Genoa in 1536, when he was on his way back from Provence, where he had been defeated, and had completely failed at the siege of Marseilles, which had again made a most heroic defence. This visit had not much result, but at least it had the advantage for the younger Medici of keeping him in the remembrance of Charles V., whose support would soon be of so great importance to him. We are told that on his return to Florence he continued his studies, and was also still engaged in a lawsuit, which had lasted for years, with two other cousins, Lorenzino and Giuliano, sons of Piero Francesco dei Medici and Maria Soderini, concerning property which came from their great-grandfather, another Piero dei Medici; the dispute had been carried on from the days of Caterina Sforza.

This Lorenzino, so called from his small stature, was a talented and accomplished young noble, but of a wild and turbulent spirit. He had lived some time in Rome under the patronage of Clement VII., until a disgraceful adventure in which he was supposed to have taken part compelled him to leave the city. He returned to Florence, and soon became the intimate associate of Alessandro, joining in all his pursuits and apparently encouraging his dissipation. But all the time he appears to have formed the stern design of playing the part of another Brutus, and ridding his native city of the tyrant who oppressed it. At length an opportunity occurred. Alessandro was persuaded to go to Lorenzino's house in pursuit of a base intrigue, and there, on the night of January 6, 1537, he was murdered, after a desperate struggle. Lorenzino was at first undecided whether he should openly avow the deed and call upon the men of Florence to assert their freedom; but on further consideration, he decided to lock the door of the chamber where Alessandro lay dead, to escape at once to Bologna, and there announce to the exiles that their opportunity had come.

Thus the murder of the Medici ruler was only discovered next morning, and then Cardinal Cibò kept the matter secret while he sent in urgent haste for the Captain of the Guard Alessandro Vitelli, and Ridolfo Baglioni, who commanded the infantry of Cortona and Arezzo, bidding them hasten to bring as large a force as possible to Florence in order to keep the citizens under control. Meantime Lorenzino had made good his escape, first to Bologna and then to Venice, where he found Filippo Strozzi, who at once made the news known to the other exiles.

The curious document in which Lorenzino gives his reasons for the murder is preserved, and throws light upon the hatred felt for the tyrant, though no good result can ever come from treachery and assassination. He declares that, during the six years of Alessandro's rule, he had exceeded the crimes of Nero and Caligula. He declares that not only did this cruel tyrant poison the Cardinal Ippolito and his companions, but that he also caused the death of his own mother, of whom he was ashamed. . . . Lorenzino explains his reason for flight : he only desired to free his country from intolerable slavery ; and he ends by lamenting the want of public spirit and courage which prevented the men of Florence from rising to assert their ancient freedom. Such is the account given by the chief actor in this tragedy of his vain and futile crime, which only tightened the chains of despotism upon his native city. He paid the penalty by eleven years of unhappy exile before he, in his turn, was assassinated, it is believed by order of the Grand Duke Cosimo.

Aldo Mannucci gives a very full and particular account of all that happened after the murder of Alessandro. When the news reached Cosimo the next day, he was at his castle of Trebbio in the Mugello, with a hunting party. Some old soldiers who had fought in his father's Black Bands, who were stationed near, seem to have approached him with the offer of accompanying him to Florence with an armed force, to assert his right to the succession. But this youth of eighteen was far too astute to run any risks, and he dismissed them with thanks, to hasten at once to the city and present himself unattended to the cardinal, who was now supported

by troops to hold the citizens in subjection. A Council had been hastily assembled at the palace, where Guicciardini, Acciajoli, and others discussed the question of choosing a Chief Magistrate, and the only rival to Cosimo appeared to be an illegitimate infant son of Alessandro, whose claims were soon set aside. Cosimo himself behaved with so much deference and humility that the members of the Council felt quite assured he would be entirely guided by their influence, being so young and inexperienced.

The result was not long doubtful. Almost before the citizens had learnt what had happened, amidst conflicting rumours, the streets were filled with armed men who shouted: "Long live Duke Cosimo and the Medici!" and his election was thus carried by surprise. We are told that when the young prince went to his mother's palace with the first rumour of his greatness, Maria Salviati drew him into her most private chamber, and thus dramatically addressed him:

"My only son, dearer to me than all things, my only hope; if you have any care for your life, give up this desire to be the Lord of those who were born your equals and who hate nothing more than to have 'one only Lord' over them, and one who was born in their City and subject to their laws. . . . You will be in great peril of your life on which mine depends. . . . Remember all that I have suffered on your behalf since the untimely death of your father, that I might preserve you alive; how I have watched over you and defended you with care and diligence from foes of your own blood, from deadly pestilence and from many dangers . . . and now that I had

hoped to reap the fruit of my labours, and pass from anxious watching into secure joy, you would give me cause for unceasing tears, and end at the same time my misfortunes and my life. . . .

“For I am certain, yea, it is God’s truth, that in your youth and audacity you will go forth and tempt Fortune, and so meet with the atrocious fate of the Duke Alessandro. . . . This will of a certainty befall him who oppresses the liberties of the State, and wishes to become absolute Lord of the people. Consider, too, especially with the Family of the Medici, how, if you have studied History, you will remember that expulsion, exile, and ruin have befallen the most distinguished of them, and you will understand that Fortune has no sooner shown them her face than she turns her shoulder upon them.

“Let us suppose that, placed as you are, without any shedding of blood and without any resistance from the chief men of the City, you succeed in obtaining this supreme rank—remembering always the rapid changes of envious Fortune—with what heart will you become the Governor of a people who for so many, many years have maintained their liberty? The love of freedom being such a living thing and so deeply rooted in the heart of the Florentines, that it may not be extinguished by any means so long as their life endures. For them slavery would be worse than death. And how will you have the heart to take your seat on that throne, which is still stained and warmed with the blood of your predecessor, who died, not so much for the injustice of his conduct and the tyranny of his ways, as for being in possession of that very post to which you aspire? Pause one moment to think of him whom you desire

to follow. Who was the cause of his death? One to whom he was connected by kinship, to whom he trusted his person more than any other. . . . How much more then had he to expect from those who were not his relations, not his friends, but his deadly foes?

“Now suppose that you easily obtain, and securely enjoy for a long time this which you so ardently desire, do you not see that you act against the precepts of wise men, as I have heard it said many times . . . that when there are two sides, one profitable, but not honest; the other honest, but not profitable, we must choose the latter . . . for a man of noble heart would elect to live as a private citizen in a Free State, loved by all good men and feared by none, rather than to be in high position and supreme power, hated and feared alike by good and evil.

“For God’s sake, Cosimo, give up this enterprise; and if the reasons which I have given do not move you, be touched, my son, by these my tears, which will flow thus for the few years left to me, in my last refuge. And if I still have no power to persuade my son, I will turn to Thee, oh God, the sole Foreseer of future things, praying Thee that what Thou shalt put into the heart of Cosimo to do, may be for our good, and for that of our City and our State.”

If poor Maria Salviati really made this fine speech on behalf of Liberty, she must have known her son too well to believe that it would make any impression upon him. The chronicler gives us his answer—full of the usual platitudes of a youth, with already the instincts of a tyrant, who argues that a despotism is the safest and best form of government. . . .

After Cosimo had left the cardinal, there had been a very stormy discussion of the Council, and it had been at length decided that Cosimo should take the name of Head of the Republic, and should be bound by the advice of the Signoria, employ no foreigners as lieutenants in the city, and be satisfied with the modest salary of 12,000 ducats, instead of 18,000, which Alessandro had required. They made many other conditions, which were meekly listened to, but they little knew with whom they had to deal. This boy of eighteen had long set his heart upon the succession to the post of Alessandro, whose murder had only brought it sooner within his reach. He listened meekly to all the discussions, but he was resolved upon nothing less than absolute power, which he would acquire by craft and intrigue. Clement VII. was dead, and there was no Medici Pope to support him—indeed, the present Pope, Paul III., was a Farnese, and entirely opposed to his family. Cosimo knew that this was the crisis of his fate, the long-anticipated moment when success or failure hung in the balance, and everything depended upon himself alone.

He took bold and decided action at once ; made sure of the loyalty of Vitelli, the Captain of the Guard, and the other leaders of troops ; agreed to everything suggested by the Council, and sent messengers to the Emperor, Charles V., to inform him of the people's choice of himself as "*Capo primario della Città di Firenze e suo Dominio*," and respectfully implored the sanction of His Imperial Highness. He had a powerful enemy in Paul III., who looked upon the murder of Alessandro as an opportunity for him to obtain the Lordship of Florence for his own nephew,

and who at once sent emissaries to Pisa and Florence, to incite the people to acknowledge his supremacy. It was on January 10, 1537, that Cosimo was publicly proclaimed by the Council of the Forty-eight, and on that day he appears to have taken up his abode in the fortified castello, where the young widowed Duchess, Marguerite of Austria, had already sought refuge. This strong fortress had been at once taken possession of by Vitelli, Captain of the Guard, who murdered the castellan. Cosimo remained here till January 18, and from this date we have an extremely interesting diary of everything that happened during the next eventful year, set down day by day, in the handwriting of two nobles from Siena, who were sent by that Republic to condole with the widow of the murdered Alessandro, daughter of the Emperor. A few quotations from this unique record will present a very vivid picture of that exciting period.

From the Letters of Girolamo Spannocchi

“*Jan. 18, 1537.*—Arrived safely in Florence, *ad ore 23.* [11 p.m.]. . . . There is quiet in the city under the command of Alessandro Vitelli. . . . The Lord Cosimo goes about with the same guard as Duke Alessandro had, or greater, and thus holds great state. . . . This evening he came with the Reverendissimo Cibo from the Citadel, which is guarded by 500 soldiers, and they took possession of the Palace of the Duke Alesõ. Hither came the Lord Piero Colonna from Genoa, in the service of the Emperor, and they all held consultation together. . . .

“They have this day sent a company of men to meet the three Cardinals who come from Rome.

Giovanni Salviati [brother of Maria Salviati], Niccolò Ridolfo, and Niccolò Gaddi." [Instead of arriving peaceably, they were coming armed, and they were warned that they could not enter the city thus.]

"*Jan. 19.*—This morning, as you desired me, I went to visit His Exc. in the Palace of Duke Aless°, and there were present many of the first citizens, paying their court. . . . It is true that there is much discontent, and people ask why the Cardinals were delayed; they are expected to-morrow. Even the Card. Cibo said to me: 'What can they do? We have the power in hand and they are disarmed.' I hear that no one in Florence or within eight miles is to have in his house arms of any kind, under the greatest penalties. . . . I hear that Filippo Strozzi has given 10,000 scudi to raise soldiers [in the neighbourhood of Bologna, against Cosimo].

"*Jan. 21.*—The three Cardinals entered Florence last night at the Ave Maria, with about 100 horsemen of their kindred; and the Lord Cosimo went to meet them with about a hundred well-armed men in his company, with Card. Cibo, for about a mile outside the Porta S. Niccolò. At the entrance all the courtiers were examined, and whoever wore a coat of mail had to take it off, and no one was suffered to bear arms. Their baggage was taken to the customs, to see if there were any weapons, as was believed. The Signor Cosimo rode in by the side of his uncle, Card. Salviati, and Cibo with the other two, and there was a great crowd to see the arrival. Strong guards were placed round the Palace of the Sig. Cosimo and in all the streets adjoining, as if a rising were expected. Most of the citizens are very pleased at the coming of the Cardinals. . . .

“*Jan. 23 [ore 19].—* . . . Last night at the meeting which was held, the Cardinals were asked whether they would agree to the appointment of the Lord Cosimo, under the protection of the Emperor. They replied that they knew no better way of securing the peace of the City, but that they strongly wished for the return of the exiles. To this the reply was that first other things must be settled, and then they would treat about the coming home of those who had been exiled. . . .

“The Cardinals have resolved to have their wishes written down by way of a memorial to the Imperial side. . . .

“Great numbers of armed foot-soldiers are constantly entering the City and are being distributed in the houses of the chief citizens . . . and since the coming of the Cardinals, no one has been allowed to leave the city.” [This introduction of soldiers was contrary to the promise made to the Cardinals, but Vitelli and Cosimo cared nothing for this.]

“*Jan. 25.—*Last night the Lord Marquis of Aguilar entered Florence and was lodged in the Duke’s Palace. He was Charles V.th’s ‘*oratore*’ [envoy] to the Pope. . . . News came this morning that the three Cardinals were leaving, and all their horses and baggage were ready, and a great multitude of citizens, about 4,000 persons, had collected to see them depart ; when Guicciardino and Vitelli arrived with about 300 armed soldiers and filled the streets round the Salviati Palace and talked with the Cardinals and persuaded them to put off their departure. . . . Then the Lord Aless. Vitelli returned to the Castello, and he never goes in or out with less than 200 armed men, as though he had to fight ; and in certain places, he has the

houses watched before he passes. . . .” [This is explained by the fact that he was on very doubtful terms with Cosimo, who was jealous of his command of the Citadel, which he professed to hold solely for the Emperor. It is known that Cosimo had been advised to seize him some day when he came to pay his salute, to make him prisoner and then at once to have him thrown out of window into the street, as a traitor who had stolen the fortress.]

“*Jan. 26.*—The three Cardinals had promised that the soldiers raised by the exiles in the Val di Chiana should be disbanded, and this not having been carried out, . . . it was decided that the Cardinal Salviati with the Lord Martio Colonna should be sent in person to see that this was carried out. A great number of armed men were called out, apparently to intimidate Salviati. . . . They departed this evening, and it is believed Salviati will not return. . . .

“*Jan. 28.*—Ridolfo and Gaddi were to have gone to-day, but they are still here. . . .

“*Jan. 28.*—We are expecting news of the dispersion of the men raised in the Val di Chiana, but no word has come yet. . . .”

The departure of Cardinal Salviati was lamented by the people of Florence, for in the old days his family had always been loved and respected, and he was looked upon as their friend. It would be a comfort to Maria Salviati to meet her favourite brother again ; but knowing the views he held about Cosimo, it would be difficult to reconcile her affection for him with loyalty to her son, who had attained his heart's desire, and for whom there was no turning back. Maria had hoped much from her brother's mediation

for the return of the exiles and the cause of peace ; but soon, like everybody else, she must have seen that there was no security for Filippo Strozzi and the others, in the hollow promises of forgiveness and restoration.

The continued strife was in some measure to be put down to the cause of so much woe in unfortunate Italy—the long endurance of the rivalry of Charles V. and François I., between whom war had begun again.

CHAPTER XVI

Cosimo defeats the exiles from Florence (the Party of Freedom, with Filippo Strozzi at their head) at the battle of Montemurlo, in July 1537—The patriots are brought prisoners to Florence and put to death—Cosimo marries Eléonora de Toledo—Sad fate of Filippo Strozzi.

THE diary of the ambassador from Siena is much taken up with the movements of the exiles in Bologna, who were joined by the three Roman cardinals. Cosimo kept a keen and anxious watch upon them, and was constantly engaged in strengthening his fortifications and raising fresh soldiers. Having ordered the destruction of the old Palace of the Medici, which had belonged to Lorenzino, the murderer of Alessandro, he now thought it was time to attend to his predecessor's funeral. This is the account of the imposing ceremony, given by Girolamo Tantucci, of Siena :

“*March 12.*— . . . The obsequies of the Duke will take place for certain on Wednesday. All is ready, and I am told there will be 120 followers besides the Court of the Duchess ; and there are 12 black banners and other things. . . .

“*March 14.*—This morning the funeral of the late Duke took place ‘*a le 17 ore.*’ At the gate of the Palace, stood the bier in the middle of the street, on



Brogi, photo.

Bronzino : Florence.

MARIA DEI MEDICI, DAUGHTER OF COSIMO I.

which was an image copied from life, in a doublet of crimson satin with surcoat of gold brocade, and the ducal crown on its head, . . . the procession set forth, the bier followed by 22 pages with torches . . . then came all the Magistrates of the City and a great number of citizens ; and from the Palace issued his servants and those of the Duchess to the number of 130 each, all in deep mourning, like the pages round the bier. Then in due time came the Illustrious Lord Cosimo, and Messer Lelio da Fano who recited the funeral oration. More than 1,000 priests and friars next joined in procession, then a number of horsemen all in black, and twelve bands of soldiers, bearing three great red standards with the ducal arms, followed by 300 bearing tapers of yellow wax ; and the bier was borne by twenty deputies of the House of Medici, all in mourning. And in this order the Lord Cosimo, with all the citizens, followed to the Church of San Lorenzo [where the body of Alessandro was placed in the new Sacristy in the marble tomb made by Michelangelo for the Duke of Urbino]. During the whole ceremony, the streets were strongly guarded by armed soldiers. . . .

“ *March 19.*—Things remain very quiet here. Although it is true that most of the citizens are not a little discontented. . . .

“ *March 23.*— . . . There have been found in the house of Bart° Valori a quantity of arms . . . pikes and swords, enough to arm more than 120 men. And the master of the house and his two servants have been taken prisoners and will suffer the punishment threatened. . . . A citizen who spoke of injustice . . . was condemned to be beaten with a cord and fined 200 scudi. . . .”

It would be too long to give the extremely interesting account in this diary of all the intrigues of the Pope, the King of France, and the Emperor, and the consequent actions of the Florentine exiles and Filippo Strozzi, whose high rank, great wealth, and determined character placed him at their head. Matters were at length brought to a crisis by the arrival in Florence of Ferdinando de Silva, Count of Cifuentes, imperial agent in Rome, who was to mediate for the exiles, hearing all the arguments on both sides. His decision, no doubt settled long before, was absolutely against the claims of Filippo Strozzi and his companions; and the question was finally settled by confirming, on behalf of the Emperor, the election of Cosimo as successor to all the power and dignity of the late Chief of the City, Alessandro. He was also permitted to use the title of Duke of the Republic. This important event took place on June 21, 1537, and from that hour all real hope of freedom died in Florence. Cifuentes was also charged to see to the interest of the widowed Duchess, and an arrangement was made by which Cosimo was to take charge of all her property for three years, paying her an annual sum of 7,500 gold scudi. This caused additional heavy taxes to be levied upon the citizens of Florence, who were quite reduced to despair.

But worse was in store for them. A system of spies was established, and any one who was disaffected or even ventured to say a hasty word against Cosimo was arrested and cruelly punished, often by cutting out his tongue. On July 30 the new ruler passed a law by which every householder was commanded to keep a light in his window after midnight, under penalty of being fined twenty-five gold florins; and

he was forbidden to go outside his door after midnight, or he became liable to the cruel punishment of having his hand cut off. Moreover, in time of disturbance in the city, any one who left his home might be murdered with impunity, either by day or by night. These are only a few instances of the stern regulations which made this a reign of terror.

Meantime the "Fuorusciti" (exiles), as they are always called, despairing of restoring their state to liberty by peaceful means, had collected large sums of money from the King of France, Filippo Strozzi, and other wealthy members of their league, and had raised a considerable force at Bologna and elsewhere. They had also friends and sympathisers in many towns of Tuscany, more especially at Prato and Pistoia; and as news was constantly brought to Cosimo, he thought it wise to arrange for the return to Florence of the young widowed Duchess, who had gone to Prato, on July 10, with his mother, to whom she was much attached. It had been arranged that Filippo Strozzi, Valori, and other important leaders should approach Florence, in order to give courage to their friends within the city, and induce them to make a rising at the moment of attack.

For this purpose they had selected the fortress of Montemurlo, on a spur of the Apennines, close to Prato, and above the high-road which leads from Pistoia to Florence. There must have been some traitor amongst them who gave instant information to Cosimo, for the young ruler at once gathered all the Spanish troops in the neighbourhood on the side of Fiesole; and in the middle of the night they were joined by the Italian infantry, under Alessandro Vitelli and Piero da Castel di Piero, and made their

way through the summer twilight in the direction of Pistoia. At dawn they had passed through Prato and were close to the hill of Montemurlo, and had soon made an end of the sentinels below the castle, which was half ruined and incapable of any serious defence. Vitelli set fire to the gates, and in a short time, after a most heroic defence, all the assembled chiefs of the exiles were taken prisoners. Piero Strozzi, the son of Filippo, who had the day before arrived with a body of soldiers, and happened to be outside the castle, was also taken ; but as the enemy did not know who he was, he managed to make his escape. All the others were conducted as prisoners to Florence and treated with shameful humiliation ; amongst them, besides Filippo Strozzi, who was claimed by Vitelli as the special prisoner of the Emperor, were Baccio and Filippo Valori, Anton dell' Albizzi, Bernardo Canigiano, and many of the most honoured names of Florentine nobles.

This utter defeat and fall of the Italian patriots took place on the night before the first of August, and decided the fate of their country. Cosimo ordered the immediate trial of the prisoners for rebellion and treason, of which he insisted that the legal penalty was death ; and this sentence he caused to be carried out with the utmost haste, lest a rebellion in the city, or an appeal to clemency from the Imperial ministers, or the judges themselves, should be a bar to his vengeance. Some few of the less important were left to linger on in Tuscan prisons, and Filippo Strozzi was kept by Vitelli as his prize in a dungeon of the Castello.

We cannot dismiss from our story this noble patriot and most splendid of all the Florentine nobles, without a few words on his tragic fate. He

lingered on in cruel captivity, frequently subjected to torture by Cosimo, under pretext of discovering any accomplices he might have in the city. At length, after more than twelve months of ignominy and suffering, fearing lest, in his weakened condition, fresh torture might draw from him some avowal fatal to his friends, "he called to mind the example of Cato of Utica, and fell by his own hand, a devoted victim to the cause of freedom." * After his death a paper was found in his handwriting, stained with his blood, addressed "Deo Liberatori," and expressing his reason for the tragic deed in the most touching and pathetic words.

After the victory of Montemurlo, Cosimo felt that he had now indeed attained the summit of success, and that the time had come to free himself from every tie and every obligation. He gradually withdrew his confidence from Cardinal Cibò and all the Senators who had promoted his election, this youth being firmly decided that no one should share his power and his glory. When he sent a messenger to announce his victory to Charles V., he took the opportunity of asking for the hand of Marguerite of Austria, the widow of his predecessor. His message was graciously received, but he was told that the young princess was already promised to Pope Paul III. for his grandson, Ottavio Farnese. There was always some fresh intrigue on hand between Emperor and Pope, and poor little Marguerite was again to be the victim. Charles had been compelled to make this bargain, for he had been unfortunate in his war with France. The Reformation in Germany was giving him a great deal of trouble ; he was afraid of losing Milan ; and his re-

* A. Roscoe.

sources were exhausted by fighting against the Turks ; he was thus extremely short of money and felt that he was alone against the world.

In this matter—the constant want of ready money—Charles V. was like his grandfather, the Emperor Maximilian, who, when on a journey, frequently had to pawn his rings to pay the bill at his hostelry. His grandson, with a far greater territory, had infinitely more claims upon him. Spain was a rich country, but the Cortes of Aragon absolutely refused to vote for a grant of money to be spent in foreign wars ; and at this time, he could not raise funds to pay the great army which he was compelled to keep in Italy, and which for so long had been a constant and terrible drain upon him. If he could make terms with Paul III., he was sure of help, for the Holy Father received an immense revenue from all the Catholic countries of Europe. So his daughter Marguerite must be sacrificed again to pay the price.

At that period, marriageable girls were always looked upon as valuable “chattels” by their kinsmen ; but the case of a princess was the worst of all. She must be prepared to go to a foreign land and marry a stranger she had never seen, in order to serve any political purpose which her legal guardian might have in view. Even widowhood might not save her, for then she could be made use of a second time. In this case it so happened that Marguerite of Austria was most unwilling to leave Tuscany, where she had been treated with great honour and kindness. She was very fond of her quiet home at Prato, and was much attached to Madonna Maria Salviati, who had been like a mother to her. But when the appointed time arrived for her marriage to the Pope’s grandson,

Ottavio Farnese—a boy much younger than herself—there was no appeal against her father's command. This young widow of fifteen set forth sadly and reluctantly on her journey to Rome with a large escort, accompanied by Cosimo to the frontiers of his dominion. Cardinal Cibò was to continue the journey as far as Siena, from whence the Emperor's general, Don Lopez Hartado, was to see her safely to Rome. Her husband had been dead a year and nine months, but Marguerite presented herself before the Pope in the deepest mourning, with all her company. The Princess wore a heavy dress of black brocade, and all her ladies were clothed in black velvet. She also gave offence by not concealing her contempt at the extreme youth of her child-bridegroom.

A curious incident of her journey had serious consequences. Marguerite had become attached to little Giulio, the illegitimate son of Alessandro, who, according to the custom of the time, appears to have been brought up in his palace. The boy was now four years old, and she expressed a strong wish to take him away with her. Now it was part of Cosimo's policy to please the Emperor's daughter in every way, and he agreed to her request, but at the same time gave strict orders to Cardinal Cibò that he was to bring back the boy with him to Florence. He could not think of suffering the Pope to keep Giulio in Rome, to be treated possibly as heir to his father, Duke Alessandro, and used as a weapon against himself.

The Cardinal obeyed these directions; but when he brought back the little son of Alessandro to Florence, he kept him in his own charge. For some time Cosimo took no notice of this, but seeing the great attention paid to the child by many of the chief

citizens, he became suspicious, and showed his displeasure by leaving the cardinal out of his Council entirely. Then a rumour spread that Cosimo had attempted to poison the boy, which was possibly true ; but in any case the Cardinal Cibò appears to have given this privately as a reason for keeping Giulio in his own care. This scandal having reached the ear of the Emperor, he sent special orders that the matter should be examined ; but meantime there was so much ill-feeling between Cosimo and the old friend who, more than any one else, had helped him to his position, that the cardinal was compelled to leave Florence. Cosimo had already got rid of Alessandro Vitelli, the captain in charge of the castello, and had induced the Emperor to appoint Don Giovanni de Luna in his place, and so, one by one, he set himself free from all who had befriended him.

When he asked for the hand of Marguerite, he also besought the Emperor to give into his rule the Citadels of Florence, Pisa, and Leghorn ; but these were not yielded to him until years later. Meantime, the Pope had recovered from his disappointment at Cosimo's victory over the exiles, and felt that he might still turn the matter to his advantage by giving his granddaughter, Vittoria Farnese, as a wife to this young and successful ruler of Florence, who had already taken the rank of Duke. But Cosimo declined this alliance, which he did not think would be much to his advantage ; for the Pope was an old man, and on his death the Farnese would lose all power. He felt that he must make a marriage which would bring him into closer connection with the Emperor, on whom all his hopes were fixed. With this idea he turned his attention towards the Viceroy of Naples,

Don Pietro de Toledo, of the family of the Duke of Alva, who had several daughters. The eldest, Isabella, was first offered to the Duke, with the suggestion that he should pay the same dowry as Duke Alessandro had paid when he married Marguerite—80,000 ducats; but Cosimo pointed out the difference between the daughter of an Emperor and that of a Viceroy; besides, he had already seen Eléonora, the second daughter, and had been attracted by her, when he paid a visit three years before at the Court of Naples. After some negotiation, an arrangement was made by which the dowry was fixed at 20,000 ducats, with an additional sum as a present to the bride.

The Viceroy of Naples was in the highest favour with the Emperor, who looked upon him as an intimate friend; and the proposed marriage was entirely approved of by his Imperial Majesty. It took place with great ceremony in the early summer of 1539, when Duke Cosimo, after defeating all his enemies and making himself sole despotic ruler of Florence, was still only a youth of twenty. With princely pomp, two ambassadors, Luigi Ridolfo and Jacopo dei Medici, were sent to Naples to go through the form of marriage, in the Duke's name, with the Signora Eléonora. She then set forth, with a great escort of Spanish and Neapolitan nobles, in seven fine galleys to Leghorn, where, after a prosperous voyage, the bride was welcomed and received by the Archbishop of Pisa and a noble company. On the way to Pisa, the Duke of Florence met her, and with much state conducted her into the city, which was decorated with the usual triumphal arches, banners, flowers, etc. After resting there a few days the bridal company

continued the journey to Florence, where there was a magnificent reception, with more arches, statues, festivals, and entertainments, prepared with the most lavish expense in order to win the goodwill of the people.

The bride was received by her mother-in-law, Madonna Maria Salviati, with every sign of affection, and outward appearances were respected in every way. But the poor lady, with her warm, impetuous heart, had nothing in common with this cold, proud Spanish girl, who suffered her presence in the palace as a kind of housekeeper, but treated her with indifference and disrespect, following the example of her husband, whose ingratitude to his devoted mother had long been a matter of common repute. Eléonora was never liked by the Florentines, who looked upon her as a "barbarous Spaniard," while they were devoted to Maria Salviati, who reminded them of the old days of freedom, and who gave herself up to works of charity amongst the poor and to religious duties, possibly with the secret hope of thereby making atonement for the harshness and cruel inflictions of her son. Maria was already afflicted with a painful incurable disease, and had not many years of endurance before her.

During this year of comparative peace, when there was a truce between the Emperor and the King of France, Cosimo, with consummate wisdom, resolved to convert the Palazzo Vecchio—the ancient home of Liberty, and a reminder of the former greatness of their Republic to the people of Florence—into a dwelling for himself. This grand old palace of the people, built in 1208 by Arnolfo di Lapo, was in itself a record of the history of the Republic. The Guelfs,

who were then in power, insisted that "where the house of the traitor Uberti had been, there the sacred foundations of the House of the People should not be laid," and this accounts for the irregular form of the great rugged mass of building. The tower of the Vacca family was used by Arnolfo as the foundation of his own square battlemented tower, in which hung the massive bell, of which the people said, when it tolled: "La Vacca mugghia" (The cow lows).

The work of reconstruction was given to Vasari, who made great alterations in the interior, but did not change the outside much. All the escutcheons and coats-of-arms, so characteristic of Italian town-halls, still remained. There you could see the White Lily of the Commune, the Red Lily of the Ghibellines, the keys of the Guelfs, the tools of the Wool-Carders, the six balls of the Medici, and even the monogram of Christ, Who, in those troublous days of 1537, had been solemnly elected as their King by the despairing people of Florence. Passing through the beautiful little court of the Palazzo, with its richly decorated pillars and the fountain in the centre—Verocchio's boy playing with a dolphin—ordered by Lorenzo dei Medici, we pass up the noble staircase to the small frescoed gallery, opening into the "Sala dei Dugenti," where the Councils of War met, and into which the "Ciompi" (Wooden-shoes) had burst on that fateful day in 1378, and placed the wool-comber Michel Lando at the head of the government. A passage leads from this to the "Sala dei Cinquecento," built by desire of Savonarola to give room for the Popular Council, and here, on the walls, frescoes were painted later by Vasari to commemorate the exploits of Duke

Cosimo, and also a portrait of his father, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and himself.

Every great hall, every nook and corner of this ancient palace is indeed full of the memories of the past, which not all the changes and adornments of Duke Cosimo can obliterate. The rooms specially used by Eléonora di Toledo—of which the ceilings were painted with the lives of good women by Jean Stradan of Bruges—are still pointed out and also the little chapel adjoining, with frescoes of Bronzino. It was in the Palazzo Vecchio that Cosimo's first child was born, on April 3, 1540—a daughter, who received the name of Maria. The Duke resolved to carry out the same ceremonial which was used at the baptism of Catherine dei Medici, daughter of the Duke of Urbino; the godparents were the Directors of the Hospital of S. Maria Nuova and of the Innocenti, and the Abbess of the beautiful Convent of the Murate. A hundred and ten Florentine ladies in splendid dresses accompanied the baptismal procession, and there was no lack of profusion and magnificence both amongst the princes and the citizens on this occasion.

When the Duchess was well enough to travel, she accompanied her husband in a tour of inspection through the northern part of his Duchy. They rode through the Province of the Mugello, and on through the fresh and beautiful Casentino, at its very best with flowers and verdure, as Dante had sung it, in the fair spring time. They passed on to the Val di Chiana and stayed at Arezzo, where the fortress was almost finished, and Cosimo wished to make arrangements for its custody and defence. It had been begun in the time of Alessandro, but the works had been stopped for fear of the plague, which had come

there from Florence, and for this reason a lazzeretto had been built at Ancina. The city of Arezzo had been kept in order by the singular vigilance of the magistrates, and peace was now restored to Pistoia by the commissioner sent there. But the exiles from Florence were still making plots at Mirandola and in the States of the Church, for the Pope's hatred of Cosimo had been increased by the refusal of his granddaughter Vittoria, and he encouraged his enemies as much as possible. Another cause of anger with Paul III. was that Cosimo was supposed to have encouraged the rebellion of Perugia against the Pope, and that he had persuaded his father-in-law, Pietro de Toledo, the Viceroy of Naples, not to assist in the repression of the revolt. More than this, the Duke had received in Florence the fugitive Ridolfo Baglioni and twenty-five of his companions.

As he could obtain no redress for all these offences, Paul III. laid an interdict on the Duke and his city, but they do not appear to have been greatly disturbed by it, and by means of the Emperor a kind of armed truce was arranged.

CHAPTER XVII

The Turkish corsairs attack the coast of the Mediterranean—Cosimo meets the Emperor at Genoa—Takes part in defence of the shores of Tuscany—Dispute for precedence between the Dukes of Florence and Ferrara—Cosimo at last obtains command of his citadels from the Emperor—Birth of Francesco, the Duke's eldest son—Quarrels with Pope Paul IV.—Death of Maria Salviati—Her son's ingratitude.

IN a vast empire like that of Charles V., with its various nationalities and opposing interests, absolute peace was impossible, but in the year 1541 the truce with France had brought a lull in the storm, and the Emperor thought the time propitious for making another and stronger attack upon the Turks, who were now the terror of Europe.

Since their overwhelming success in 1526, at the Battle of Mohács, when Hungary fell a victim to its position as barrier state of Christendom, the progress of Solymán II., perhaps the greatest of the Sultans, had been most alarming. Under his "Pasha of the sea," the great corsair Barbarossa II., he had become master of the Algerian coast, his galleys infested the Mediterranean and ravaged the coasts of Spain and Italy. The Popes, as defenders of Christianity, may have preached crusades against the infidel, but they were too much occupied with their private quarrels and the advancement of their kinsmen to take any really important step. Charles V. had been practically left to fight the Turk single-

handed, for even Venice, whom the matter concerned so much on account of her Eastern trade, had recently been compelled to make terms with Solyman and yield to him her remaining islands in the Ægean Sea and her last strongholds in the Morea.

It was the more necessary for the Emperor to gain some decided success against the Turks and obtain control over the Mediterranean, as he knew that the truce with France could not last long, and, strange to say, the "Most Christian King" François I. was in close alliance with the Sultan. This unnatural friendship had begun when the King was a captive at Madrid, and in his rage against Charles V. had actually written to Solyman, asking him to attack Hungary. The Sultan's answer was a model of quiet insolence, and is worthy of quotation.

"I, who am the Sultan of Sultans, the Sovereign of Sovereigns, the distributor of crowns to the monarchs of the surface of the globe, the shadow of God upon the earth, the Sultan and Padishah of the White Sea, the Black Sea, Rumelia, Anatolia, Caramania, Rum, Sulkadf, Diarbekr, Kurdistan, Azerbijan, Persia, Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo, Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, all Arabia, Yemen and other countries which my noble ancestors (may God brighten their tombs) conquered, and which my august Majesty has likewise conquered with my flaming sword, Sultan Solayman Khan, son of Sultan Selim, son of Sultan Bayazid; you who are Francis, King of France, you have sent a letter to my Porte, the refuge of sovereigns . . . night and day our horse is saddled and our sword girt on. . . ." *

* *Marguerite of Austria*, by Christopher Hare.

When the captive King read these flamboyant words he must have realised his own insignificance ; yet it is quite possible that his suggestion may have hastened the disaster on the plain of Mohács, and when François was free, he was base enough to use the Sultan as an ally against his hated foe, the Emperor.

During that year, 1541, Charles V. had many delays before he could set forth on the enterprise which was nearest to his heart. He had to arrange for the Conference at Ratisbon, which proved of no avail to satisfy the Lutherans, then to travel through Italy and have an interview with the unreasonable Pope Paul III., so that it was September before he was ready to prepare his expedition. In vain his wisest counsellors, including the great admiral Andrea Doria, declared that the season was too late. Charles felt that he could not delay until another year, for the Cortes of Aragon had specially voted him money for this very purpose, in their horror of the ravages and atrocities committed on the coast of Spain by Barbarossa and his corsairs.

When the Emperor reached Genoa, he found awaiting him Duke Cosimo, who had just been celebrating in Florence, with great pomp, the baptism of his first son, Francesco, born on March 25. Don Giovanni de Luna had set aside his private animosity for the moment, to act as the representative of his master Charles V. on this auspicious occasion, which seemed to set the seal of continued prosperity on the Duke's supremacy. He was received with great distinction, and was promised that the disputed subject of the possession of the fortresses would be favourably considered. After this meeting, Cosimo



Alinari, photo.

Cellini: Loggia dei Lanzi, Florence.

THE PERSEUS.

accompanied his lord to the meeting with the Pope at Lucca, and here a trivial incident occurred, on which important events depended. Alfonso, Duke of Ferrara, had also come to Lucca to do homage to the Emperor, and he appears to have taken precedence as a matter of course of the Duke of Florence, who felt very much hurt and aggrieved. Still, as there were many important matters to be discussed between the Emperor and the Pope, Cosimo did not think it a suitable time to assert himself, and he let the matter pass as an accident. But Alfonso appears to have made a formal note of this as a case of precedent. It happened that, not long after, on occasion of a Festival at Rome, the Pope Paul III., who was never friendly to Cosimo, gave orders to his Master of the Ceremonies that the ambassador from Ferrara was to enter the chapel before the one from Florence, and to take the higher place. It was pointed out to some of the cardinals that this was a serious wrong to the Duke of Florence, and that he must plead the question before the Pope. A long and angry dispute followed between the two princes as to which had the right to take precedence.

On one side, it was argued by the Duke of Ferrara that his title was the more ancient, his race more noble, and his subjects more distinguished. On the other side it was claimed that besides the honourable name and reputation of the Medici family, the greatness of Florence was of such ancient date, and had always flourished in arms and in wealth ; was distinguished by fine scholarship, by the liberal arts, by the magnificence of its buildings, by the purity and charm of its language, by its poets and artists—in short, both sides pleaded everything that could be thought of ;

thus it was said that Alfonso d'Este, having served as general for the Republic of Florence, was only a feudatory, and could not be ranked so high as a prince who was free and independent. At length, the Pope, not wishing to annoy the Emperor for such a small matter, gave the decision in favour of his friend the Duke of Florence. But the contest had roused serious animosity between the two rulers, while the rest of Italy looked on with amusement, until all else was forgotten in the arrival of alarming news—the Emperor's defeat.

He had not been able to start until late in October, when the fleet, which had been collected at Majorca, met the Spanish galleys off Algiers. A furious storm of wind and rain prevented them from landing for two days, and when at last they were able to land the troops, it was impossible to put on shore the artillery, the tents, and the supplies, which were all left on board. This was the moment chosen by Barbarossa for the attack, while at the same time the heavy tempest drove a hundred ships and fourteen galleys ashore, and Doria was compelled to retreat. Those who escaped of the army made their way to Cape Matifu, and taking ship at Bugia, made the best of their way homeward, with terrible loss. In short, this promising expedition had ended in complete failure.

Don Pietro de Toledo had returned with Cosimo to Florence, but on receiving this news of disaster he hastened back to his charge at Naples. It was generally expected that France would now lose no time in putting an end to the truce.

The first attack of France was on the Netherlands, while another army invaded Roussillon, but they

were driven back on every side. However, François I. had again made an alliance with the Sultan, who sent Barbarossa into the Mediterranean, with a fleet of 180 galleys and 10,000 men, to devastate and lay waste the coast of Italy. He burnt Cotrone, Reggio, and other towns, where his corsairs committed the most horrible excesses with the full assent of the French envoy, who was on board the great galley of the admiral. Barbarossa finally set sail for the port of Marseilles, where he was received with honour and congratulations by the French Governor, the Comte d'Enghien.

Meantime the Emperor had sailed with a fleet from Barcelona to Genoa, that he might take steps for the defence of the Riviera di Ponente, and here Duke Cosimo came to meet him with the Duchess Eléonora, towards the end of April. On his way he had passed through Pisa to honour by his presence the new University, and to arrange for the building of a college for poor scholars. He then passed through Pietrasanta to see the marble quarries and the silver mines, and in crossing the mountains was in some danger from a troop of brigands who attacked his escort. Charles V. received the Duke with great favour, and invited him to join in the Conference which he was about to hold with the Marquis del Vasto and Ferrante Gonzaga concerning the affairs of Italy. Upon the promise of Cosimo to undertake the defence of the coast of Tuscany against the attacks of Barbarossa, and to advance a large sum of money towards the expense of the war in Flanders, the Emperor at length granted him the restitution of the fortresses of Florence, Pisa, and Livorno, which he had so long and earnestly desired. Charles V. remained for a few

days to discuss with the Pope the place where the next Congress was to be held, for he strongly objected to Bologna, which would be so entirely under the control of Paul III. He was too prudent to be moved by the tears and supplications of his daughter Marguerite, who implored him to give the Duchy of Milan to her husband.

The Duke of Florence accompanied his Lord in his journey, and only left him at Milan, from whence he returned home with the Duchess, full of satisfaction at the thought that henceforth he would really be master in the city. Don Giovanni de Luna had received definite orders to give up the citadel, with which he most unwillingly complied, and departed with large gifts to Siena, where the Emperor had placed him in command. On July 3, 1543, Cosimo took formal possession of the fortress with great solemnity, remaining there with all his family and the Court for one night, while the citizens were entertained with feasting and amusements in honour of the great event, which set the city free from foreign rule. The Bishop of Cortona, Giovanni Ricasoli, was sent at once to the Emperor with the promised sum of 100,000 ducats, and the fortresses of Pisa and Livorno having been duly taken over by procuration, the Duke felt that at last he was an independent prince, free from all control in his own dominions.

Yet it is a curious fact that the Duke gave the defence of his fortresses to Spanish captains and soldiers, and this points out clearly how little confidence he had in the loyalty of the Florentines. We cannot wonder when we remember the cruel laws which he passed to keep the people in subjection, the

last one being that for "blasphemy of the government" the penalty was to have the tongue pierced with a nail. He had put an end to all remains of popular liberty, and had a most complete system of spies and informers, so that nothing could happen without his knowledge. Impartial observers tell us that a great change came over the character of the gay, lively men and women of this brilliant city, who learnt by bitter experience to be cautious and silent, scarcely venturing to make a harmless remark lest some listening neighbour should be in the pay of the oppressor.

Duke Cosimo had scarcely returned to Florence when news reached him that the fleet of Barbarossa was off Corsica and approaching the coast of Tuscany. He at once sent a messenger in haste to Otto da Montauta, with orders to collect his bands, to the number of 4,000, and to advance towards the sea; but the Lords of Piombino and Siena opposed the entrance of these troops into their estates, for, in truth, they feared the help of the Duke of Florence more than the invasion of the corsairs. However, when the unfortunate inhabitants of the threatened district actually saw the dreaded galleys arriving at the mouth of the river, they compelled the Signor Appiano to accept the proffered aid, and at the sight of this strong force, Barbarossa did not think it prudent to land. The fleet returned towards Corsica, and for the moment the danger had passed. Under the orders of Montauta, Piombino, on its exposed promontory, was strongly fortified and a garrison of 300 soldiers was left in charge of the place. Watch towers were built, and the whole coast of Tuscany, as far as Pietrasanta, was put in a state of

defence, while in Pisa a large number of infantry with artillery were stationed in the citadel. Now that the Emperor had given this fortress into his power, Cosimo did much to improve the city in every way, making it more healthy by good drainage of the lower part, and by turning the marshes into fertile land. He also made a canal from Pisa to Livorno, by which the merchants might bring up their goods to the city in small vessels, to the great convenience of the inhabitants. The road from Florence to Pisa being in very bad condition, this was thoroughly remade with great care, which gave easy communication between these two important cities of the Duchy.

The Turkish fleet had moved on towards Marseilles, where it was joined by a French squadron of forty ships, and together—Christians and infidels—they set sail towards Nice, then in the dominion of the Duke of Savoy. Besieged by this strong force, Nice was in great danger, and at this moment Duke Cosimo was ill with fever, while the Duchess was ruling for him with the help of his Minister, Il Campagna. The Emperor was far away, defeating the Duke of Cleves, and the only help which could come to the beleaguered city was from the Imperial general, Alfonso del Guasto, who rapidly approached by land, and Andrea Doria by sea. They came too late to save Nice, which had been compelled to capitulate on favourable terms; but Barbarossa kept no promises, plundered the town in the night, burnt part of it, and actually carried off five thousand of the inhabitants as slaves—against all the laws of civilized nations! The citadel had held out, and was saved by the arrival of del Guasto and Doria. As for the corsairs and the

French, they returned under Barbarossa to Toulon, where he spent the winter, and for many months Christian slaves were openly sold in this city of "the Most Christian King!" We can scarcely believe this to have been possible at a time when constant appeals were being made to the faithful—both to join in a Crusade against the Turks, and also to give alms for the rescue from them of "prisoners and captives."

The surrender and destruction of Nice took place on September 8, 1543, and the same day marked the final triumph of the Emperor over the Duke of Cleves, who ceded to him the Duchy of Gelders, that centre of rebellion, and the County of Zutphen. While all this was happening, the Duchess Eléonora gave birth, on September 29, to her second son, Giovanni, whose arrival was made the occasion of much pompous ceremonial, as he was a further pledge that male heirs would not fail in succession to the Dukedom of Florence.

But this little Giovanni would never know the tender loving care of his grandmother, Maria Salviati, who had been willing to endure so much for the sake of his elder brother and sister, the little ones on whom she had poured out her love with all the passion of a desolate heart. The great Florentine lady had been treated by the cold, proud Eléonora with careless contempt, until at last her slights and insults could no more be endured by Cosimo's mother in her weakness and failing health. It was now some months since the sick woman had retired to the stillness and seclusion of her beautiful villa at Castello, the scene of so many stirring events of her past life, in the days of her Giovanni, the lover of

her youth, the husband who had been the pride and anxiety of those crowded years of glory.

It was here, in this peaceful, stately home, so charmingly situated in the sunny valley below Petraja, that her little Cosimo had really belonged to her—had been utterly and entirely hers, as a toddling child by her side, in those pleasant gardens ; the joy of her heart, the centre of all her hopes and soaring schemes. These had all been realised beyond her wildest dream. Everything had succeeded with the son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, the gallant, reckless, unrivalled condottiere, whose only prize had been a hero's death and empty fame. Cosimo had attained in early life a position far beyond any Medici before him, and yet, to the loving heart of his mother, all this success, bought by intrigue and crime, was but Dead Sea fruit to her—dust and ashes. Cosimo was Duke of Florence, absolute Lord of his native city ; but she had lost the son she loved, and whom she had perhaps alienated by too much anxious tenderness, too much restless and disturbing emotion, until his marriage had widened the breach and given a kind of sanction to his ingratitude. For Cosimo was not grateful to his mother, notwithstanding all her devotion to him. She had not the art of managing those she loved : she was too impulsive, too sensitive, too easily moved to anger and grief.

Maria Salviati had long been a familiar presence in the new, oppressed, and silent Florence. Her tall figure, clad in the simple nun-like clothes which she always wore, with her pale sad face, as white as her long veil—her deep blazing eyes almost the only sign of vitality—she moved amongst the people like a ghost of ancient days. Deeply religious and passion-

ately charitable as of old, she haunted the church, the convent, and the hospital, when she was not passing from one afflicted home to another—ever the refuge of the poor and the oppressed.

For years past she had suffered from a wasting disease, and now the end was drawing near, in spite of all that the medical knowledge of the day could do for her, as we hear of the famous physician, Il Omobuono from Bologna, and others, attending her. While his mother was dying in her home at Castello, Cosimo was enjoying a successful hunting party, and it needed the very strongest remonstrances of his Minister, del Campagna, to induce him to visit her on her death-bed. It was on December 12, 1543, that she passed away from this troublesome world, at the age of forty-four years, worn out with sickness and sorrow. All that was left of old Florence—the friends of the house of Salviati, the secret lovers of freedom, and, above all, the poor people—mourned her loss, not only for her own virtues but as a link with the happy past. Maria Salviati forbade all pomp and show at her burial, but she could not escape a funeral oration which the historian Varchi delivered in the Accademia of Florence, in which she was lauded to the skies for those very qualities of a great princess which she would most earnestly have disclaimed.

Meantime the war between the Emperor and François I. was continuing with various successes on either side. Henry VIII. had promised to invade France with an army of 35,000 men, but he did not show great energy, and did little more than conquer Boulogne for himself. On April 14, 1544, the Duc d'Enghien defeated the imperial troops under del

Guasto at the Battle of Cerisole, but this victory had not much result, as the Spaniards held all the strong places in Lombardy. Piero Strozzi, the son of the unfortunate Filippo, continued to show himself the inveterate enemy of Duke Cosimo, and with the help of the other exiles kept him in a constant state of anxiety. His escape on that memorable night at Montemurlo had been the one disaster of Cosimo's prosperous career. Piero fought most gallantly on the side of the French, and the Pope constantly allowed him to raise troops in the Papal states. At length, on September 18, 1544, the Peace of Cr py was signed between the Emperor and Fran ois I., who agreed to give up his alliance with the Turks and to help in the matter of a General Council to be held at Trent.

Duke Cosimo had again made himself useful that spring in helping to defend the coast of Tuscany against the attacks of Barbarossa who, happily for the inhabitants on the shores on the Mediterranean, returned to Constantinople in 1544, and went no more to sea before his death, two years later.

When peace was made with France, and ambassadors from Ferrara and Florence presented themselves at the Court of the French King, the old dispute about precedence arose between them in a more aggravated form. Fran ois I. and the Queen of Navarre were on the side of Ferrara, to the great indignation of Cosimo. But while he was thus maintaining his dignity in France, he was losing credit in Venice, where the recent assassination, by two Florentines, of the wretched Lorenzino—who had murdered Duke Alessandro—was universally attributed to the Duke of Florence. He also caused much

scandal by taking strong measures at this time against the Dominican friars of San Marco, who, since the public burning of their leader, Savonarola, had venerated him as a martyr, followed his doctrines, and taught them to the people. Cosimo naturally resented such teaching, which must be unfavourable to his despotic rule, and began to look upon them as a sect of Anarchists, enemies of the State, and whom it was necessary to extirpate. He therefore commanded the Dominicans of San Marco, those of the Convent at Fiesole, and at S. Maddalena in Pian di Mugnone, to turn out of their monasteries, giving them a month from the 1st of August to obey. As usual on such occasions, the threatened friars appealed for help to the Pope, who willingly accepted an opportunity to attack the Duke.

Paul III. sent for the Florentine ambassador, and with "anger and contempt" abused the Duke, treating him as an irreligious and unchristian man to have committed such excesses in a time so perilous for heresy. This treatment irritated Cosimo so much that he charged his ambassador to justify his conduct to the Court of Rome, and to point out that this way of behaving would tend to make a Lutheran of him. But he did not wish to put to shame His Holiness, although he, at this very time, tolerated the Academy of heresy which the Duchess of Ferrara, Renée of France, publicly held. It was calumny to accuse the Duke of heresy, for he only wished to repress the ambition and bad example of these friars, who were doing harm to the cause of religion.

However, in the end, Duke Cosimo was compelled to yield and reinstate the Dominican Friars, as

Charles V., who had a confessor of that order, was disposed to agree with the Pope, and advised the Duke not to quarrel with him for so small a matter, more especially as it would interfere with Cosimo's hope of obtaining the cession of Piombino.

CHAPTER XVIII

The story of Siena at this period—The people rise in arms against the Governor appointed by the Emperor (1543)—They are free for five years—Mendoza sent to rule the city—His cruel treatment—Builds a citadel—Another rebellion, in which the French take part—Siena besieged by the Emperor and Florence—Heroic defence, for fifteen months, in which the ladies take parts—City yielded to Cosimo in 1559—He becomes Duke of the whole of Tuscany.

WE must now turn for a while to the story of Siena, which plays such an important part in the life and greatness of Duke Cosimo, and which was to add a most precious jewel to his diadem as Grand Duke of Tuscany.

When, in 1543, the Emperor gave up his citadel to Cosimo, Don Giovanni de Luna, the governor, was made deputy ruler of Siena. Wishing to obtain the city for himself, he tried to make alliance with the Piccolomini, and encouraged the faction of the Noveschi, chiefly composed of the burgher nobility, to recover their old dominion. In consequence, they made an attempt to murder the leaders of the Popolani at a bull-fight; but this having failed, the Noveschi rose in arms in February 1546, with cries of "Imperio e Nove! Imperio e Nove!" trusting to the support of the Spanish garrison. But the whole of the city rose in fury against them; many of them were massacred, and the rest fled, in company with Don Giovanni and his soldiers.

Rejoicing in their new-found freedom, the people placed the government of Siena in the hands of a committee of ten, consisting of the Captain of the People, and three representatives from each of the other Monti, leaving out the Monte dei Nove. This small assembly was to have all the authority of the "Balìa," the former governing body of forty representatives. For two years the city appears to have lived in a "fool's paradise," with processions and festivities in the Campo, "the city being all joyous, thinking that they had conquered and imagining that never again would any one molest it." *

But a bitter awakening was in store for them. When the Emperor had a little leisure from his pressing affairs in Germany—the Council of Trent, and the change in European policy consequent on the death of Henry VIII. and François I. (1547)—he turned his attention to rebellious Siena, and sent as their governor, Don Diego Hurtado de Mendoza. At first the people appealed to the Pope, and refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Charles V.; but at length, by the mediation of Duke Cosimo, they were induced to admit the garrison of Spaniards, in September 1548. Mendoza, who arrived in October, restored the Noveschi, replaced the "Balìa" of forty members in power, and insisted on choosing half of them himself. He ruled in the most despotic manner, quartered his soldiers in the churches of San Francesco, Sant' Agostino, San Domenico, and the Servi, and ordered all the weapons and arms in the city to be brought to San Domenico, while all the artillery was collected in the Piazzini by the side of the Campanile. He ruled the Republic with a rod of iron,

* Sozzini.

and became "a foe to Italy, to Heaven and to the world, and thought to make himself in Siena second to God."

Feeling that the Republic was under his absolute dominion, Mendoza now announced that it was the will of the Emperor to build a citadel at the city wall, and that the men of Siena were themselves to provide the materials. At this terrible news of the coming death-blow to their liberty, all the citizens, high and low, were thrilled with horror and dismay. The disaster must be averted at any cost; the tower must not be built. It was decided that an appeal should be made at once to the Emperor himself; and two of the most important men of Siena were sent to him, in November 1550, with petitions signed by more than a thousand of the people. But this was not enough they felt, and with wistful memory of the past, they determined once more to dedicate their city to the Blessed Virgin, and trust in her power to guard her own. On the following Sunday the Signori, with the captain of the city at their head, went in procession to the Duomo with the keys of the city, and fifty maidens, to whom they promised dowries for the sake of the Holy Mary. A solemn mass of the Holy Spirit was sung, and then the Captain made a long and devout prayer of dedication.

"If ever in times past, Immaculate Mother of God, our Patroness and Advocate, with compassionate prayers thou hast moved the mercy of thine only-begotten Son towards this thy most devout city, may it please thee to-day, more than ever to do so. . . .

"Behold, most Sacred Virgin . . . the souls of

the Sienese people, repentant for all their past errors, kneeling and prostrate before thy throne to beg mercy and deliverance from the projected Castle. . . .

“Further, I consecrate to thee the city ; I present to thee anew the keys . . . as to Her who is the safest and the most powerful to guard them.

“Open with them the heart of Cæsar, removing from it his needless design. Dispose him rather to preserve devout and faithful subjects . . . to his Cæsarian Majesty . . . that we may rejoice without end in our cherished liberty.”

The appeal to the Emperor was quite in vain ; now that he had given up the fortresses of Florence and others to Duke Cosimo, he was resolved to have one strong place in Tuscany. He was polite to the ambassadors, and assured them that it was for the defence of Siena’s liberty that he was having this fortress built, but he would not listen to their remonstrances, and sent them away lamenting : “We must drink this bitter chalice.”

They returned to find the foundations of the castle laid on the Poggio di San Prospero, and Mendoza, in his mantle of red cloth, constantly hurrying on the work. But a strange ghostly figure was seen amongst the labourers : the hermit Brandano, who had wandered round Italy preaching repentance, clad in sackcloth, with a halter round his neck, a crucifix in one hand and a death’s head in the other. He had appeared in Rome on the eve of the sack of the Eternal City, foretelling the coming destruction, and had been thrown into the dungeons of the Inquisition. Here again he stood on the hillside, wailing aloud : “Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman



Brogi, photo.

Titian : Turin.

POPE PAUL III.



waketh but in vain," until he was banished ; but his words were not forgotten.

Don Diego de Mendoza was absent when a conspiracy was formed to admit a large force of French and Italians, who fired the Porta Romana one evening in July 1552, and entered Siena. There was fighting all night, for the Spaniards, supported by a troop of Florentines sent by Duke Cosimo, had fortified themselves in San Domenico and in Camollia, with the fortress behind them, whither they were driven back, and many were killed ; " and so, by the grace of God, all the city was free." At the beginning of August the citadel capitulated, by the intervention of the Duke of Florence, and the defenders were allowed to retire with their arms and baggage to Florence. The French at once took possession and made over the citadel to the Republic, amidst great rejoicings and shouts of " Liberty ! Liberty ! France ! France ! " Then the nobles and the poorer citizens alike all set to work at destroying this menace to their liberty, with pickaxes and other tools, until " in the space of one hour, more was destroyed than would have been built in four months ! "

A French garrison was now supposed to be protecting Siena ; and the people, wild with delight, gave themselves up to games and amusements. The Cardinal Ippolito d'Este came in November as Lieutenant of the King of France, was welcomed with acclamation, and set to work to have new forts built outside the Porta Camollia. The people helped to work at the building, " always gladly to the sound of drums and trumpets " ; but some wise men noticed that these forts were so built that they might serve to bombard the city, as well as to defend it. Mean-

time imperial troops were collecting in the kingdom of Naples, and in the early part of 1553, a great army of Spaniards and others under Don Garzia de Toledo, the brother of Duke Cosimo's wife, invaded the domain of the Republic. Pienza and Monticchiello were taken, and Montalcino was besieged for two months, and heroically defended until, on a rumour of the Turkish fleet having arrived off the coast of Italy, Don Garzia burnt his camp and hastened to the defence of Naples. There were great rejoicings and solemn thanksgivings in the city, "thus saved as by a miracle."

By the intrigues of Duke Cosimo a conspiracy was next formed in Siena to admit his soldiers by the Porta Ovale and drive out the French. But this was discovered, and the Captain of the People and two priests in high office at the Duomo were beheaded as the chief conspirators. Early the next year, the King of France was unwise enough to send Piero Strozzi, the most deadly enemy of Cosimo, as his Vicar-General. This at once gave the Duke of Florence a pretext for openly attacking the city, as one of the conditions of the last peace had been that Siena was to receive no "Fuorusciti" (exiles). The Florentine forces now joined openly with those of the Emperor under the command of Gian Giacomo, Marquis of Marignano; and on the night of January 26, 1554, suddenly took possession of the forts outside the Porta Camollia. This was the beginning of that last and terrible siege, in which Siena showed as splendid heroism as had Florence twenty-four years before, with the same fatal end—the death of their liberty. During fifteen months of fearful suffering and desolation for the unfortunate city and all the country round, the ruth-

less war was carried on between France and Spain for the possession of the last great Republic of the Middle Ages.

In order to give Piero Strozzi a free hand elsewhere, Blaise de Montluc was sent with more French and Swiss troops to take charge of the city, and this gallant soldier, with his dauntless courage and gay humour, won the affection of the people, whose bright, hopeful temper was so like his own. He was moved to enthusiasm by the devotion of the ladies, who set forth in companies with picks and shovels to help with the fortifications and, in the early days of hope and high spirits, were distinguished by their bright colours—violet, carnation and white. Montluc thus addresses them in his “Book”:

“It shall never be said, you ladies of Siena, that I will not immortalise your names . . . for in truth you are worthy of eternal praise, if ever women were. . . .”

In August, Piero Strozzi and the pick of the French soldiers sallied forth, and thought to make a diversion by carrying the war into the territory of Florence. He engaged with the army of the Marquis of Marignano, on the hills near Marciano in the Val di Chiana, and a terrible battle took place under the dazzling sun, when the Imperial troops won a decisive victory. There was great loss of life; four thousand of the gallant company under Strozzi were slain on the field, while the wounded crept back to Siena and filled all the hospitals, and the city was full of lamentation. Once more the people went in solemn procession through the city, with three hundred little girls, clad in white and barefooted, at their head, crying, “Christe

audi nos!" and bearing with them the "Madonna della Grazie."

But the enemy drew their lines ever closer and closer round the beleaguered city, and the famine became more hopeless until, in despair, the hapless citizens decreed that the "useless mouths" must be turned out from their midst. Special officials were appointed to do this awful deed, and on the night of September 22 more than a thousand weeping, terror-stricken men, women, and children were driven out through the gates. Then Strozzi insisted that seven hundred more must go, in order to leave food for the fighting men, and this time they were to be protected by a strong escort through the lines of the foe. But the pitiful company, amongst whom were two hundred and fifty young children, fell into an ambush; many were killed, and the rest driven back to the Porte Fontebranda, where they were found next morning, "wounded and beaten, lying there with cries and lamentations." The Rector of the Spedale gave up his post that he might take no part in such cruel doings; but the starvation was so terrible and the case so desperate that the "useless mouths" were expelled, again and again, with still more fatal results. They reached the number of over four thousand.

Piero once more left Siena in the hope of obtaining help, while the Archbishop, Piccolomini, and others, made their escape to Montalcino, a strongly fortified place, which held out for some time longer. The fate of Siena was now sealed. Vain appeals were made to Venice, the Duke of Ferrara, and to the Pope, whose mother had been a lady of Siena. But he coldly advised immediate surrender to the mercy of the Emperor. With heroic endurance, the starving city

still held out until not a drop of wine or a morsel of wholesome food was left, and people fell dead in the streets. Heaven and earth were alike deaf to their heart-broken cry for help, and the Sienese at last surrendered to Duke Cosimo, who took possession in the name of the Emperor. Montluc had insisted on a free exit being allowed to the Florentine exiles; these were joined by a number of the citizens, making up eight hundred in all, who passed together out of the Porta Romana. The very soldiers were moved to tears, as Montluc declares, at the sight "of this misery and desolation of a people who had manifested themselves so devout for the conservation of their liberty and honour."

Of the forty thousand inhabitants of the doomed city dwelling in it before the siege, only six thousand remained after that April day of 1555. A garrison was placed in conquered Siena, which was governed for two years by the tyrannical Cardinal of Burgos for Philip II., who had now succeeded his father, Charles V. At length, in 1557, it was given up to Duke Cosimo of Florence, who united this long-coveted city and dominion with his Dukedom of Tuscany, under nominal feudal service to the Emperor. But Spain reserved the coast towns of the late Republic—Talamone, Orbetello, Port' Ercole and Porto Santo Stefano—which from this time were known under the name of the Spanish *Præsidia*, and added to the Crown of Naples.

The heroic little Republic of Montalcino, with its noble refugees, held out during four years longer until, at length, when the Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis was held, two ambassadors from the city were sent to plead for freedom. When this was refused, Montal-

cino capitulated in August 1559, and Cosimo now felt that he was indeed lord and supreme master of the whole of his Duchy of Tuscany. He made a triumphant entry into Siena in 1561, and from this time he governed the conquered city by means of a Lieutenant-General, suffering the people to keep up the form of their Republican government, such as the "Balià," or Council of Magistrates—but he chose them himself. All that remained to the people under this vain show of freedom were the games and sports of the various contrade, in which they have always distinguished themselves. Even at the darkest moment of that terrible siege, during the incessant bombardment, they had still played their games at intervals in the Campo, and at one of these—a "giuoco delle pugna"—Montluc tells us that he was touched almost to tears by their gallant spirit, which could so forget for awhile their hardships and deadly peril.

When Duke Cosimo dei Medici received the allegiance of Siena and finally took possession of the dominion of the Republic, all Tuscany was united under one rule, for the first time since the Roman Empire.

CHAPTER XIX

Dispute between the Emperor and Pope Paul IV.—Great floods in Florence—Cosimo sends his eldest son, Francesco, to do homage to the Emperor at Genoa—Abdication of Charles V.—His son Philip II. is King of Spain; his brother Ferdinand becomes Emperor—Death of Cosimo's eldest daughter Maria—His third daughter Lucrezia marries Alfonso, heir of Ferrara—Election of Pope Pius IV. (1559)—Cosimo founds the Order of Knights of San Stefano to defend the coast of Tuscany against the Turks.

HAVING turned aside to tell the story of Siena, we must now go back to the other events which concerned Duke Cosimo during the eventful years of that long and desperate struggle. Many momentous changes had taken place in Europe. As we have already seen, Henry VIII. of England and François I. of France had passed away from the scene of their conflict, almost at the same time, early in 1547. They were succeeded by the weaker government of their sons, Edward VI. and Henri II., whose wife, Catherine dei Medici, had not yet begun to assert herself, although she made no secret of preferring Strozzi to Cosimo.

The dispute still continued between the Pope and the Emperor, as to whether the Great Council of the Church should be held at Bologna or at Trent, and also concerning the minor question of obtaining Parma and Piacenza for Ottavio Farnese. This was not settled when, on November 10, 1549, Paul III,

died—in distress of mind at having failed to satisfy his family, for whose sake he had quarrelled with Charles V. and sacrificed the interests of the Holy See. There was a long Conclave, which ended with a compromise between the contending parties and the election of the Cardinal del Monte, under the name of Julius III. Although he had been on the side of France and had little in his personal character to recommend him, the party of the Emperor accepted him in the hope that he would choose peace rather than war. Cosimo had done his best to secure this election, because del Monte was born near Arezzo, and therefore was a subject of his own.

The year 1547 had been an anxious time for the Duke of Florence, as there had been great floods from the valley of the Mugello and from the hills round Florence, which was devastated by the overflowing rivers. This occurred in the warm season, when there was much danger of plague, unless prompt measures were taken to cleanse and disinfect the city. It was just at this time that he lost his third son, little Pietro, who died in June 1547, at the age of ten months. The following July, another son was born to him, to whom the name of Garzia was given, after his mother's brother. When, that same autumn, the Emperor was sending his son Philip to Flanders, and the Prince arrived at Genoa, all the Italian rulers hurried there to pay homage to the rising sun. But the Duke of Florence, not feeling quite sure of his own safety, thought it would be a wise step to send his eldest son Francesco, a child of seven, as his representative, with the Bishop of Cortona, Don Pietro de Toledo (Viceroy of Naples), and a magnificent escort. On occasions of this kind Cosimo never spared expense. He

exacted by heavy taxation the last penny he could squeeze out of the unfortunate Florentines, for he well knew the need of wealth for carrying out his ambitious schemes.

At that moment, the Duke's great ambition was to become absolute master of Piombino, so important a post for the defence of the coast from the piratical Turks, and which had already been taken out of the failing hands of Appiano. This was delayed, with constant promises, for some years, but at length both the Lordship of Piombino and also that of the Island of Elba were ultimately granted to the Duke of Florence, who, by his steady support of the Emperor, had well deserved these accessions of territory. After the death of Barbarossa, a new corsair, Dragut by name, had been set over Barbary by the Sultan, and again the shores of Italy and Sicily had been ravaged. The Turks had also renewed their attacks upon Hungary, and this constant warfare with the infidels, supported by the French fleet, added to the intolerable burdens which the Emperor had to endure with failing health at this dark period of his life.

Born at the opening of the century—February 24, 1500—Charles V. had endured the burden of empire almost from his childhood; his reign had been one long struggle to carry on the dynastic policy of his race, and having accomplished all that was possible, his desire was now to consolidate his successes and to ensure their continuance to his heir. In July 1554 the marriage of his son Philip to his second cousin Mary, Queen of England, was quite in accordance with the Hapsburg spirit of gaining territory by alliance, and it was with patriotic and religious self-devotion that the young Spanish prince accepted a

bride so much older than himself and so unattractive in appearance and character.

In religious matters, after all his efforts, Charles V. had to acquiesce, against his convictions, in the illusive Peace of Augsburg, for now that he desired to rest from his work, peace was his great desire. After the futile and insignificant Papacy of Julius III., the succession of Paul IV. in May 1555—the bigoted Caraffi, first Head of the Inquisition—did not give much promise of peace ; but as he became Pope at the age of seventy-nine, his rule could not be of long endurance. On hearing of the election of Paul IV. Charles remarked to the Nuncio that, as a boy of fourteen, he had heard the new Pope sing Mass at Brussels, but he made no disparaging comment, although Paul IV. was well known to be an enemy to Spain.

The Emperor of such vast dominions, in the old world and the new, had resolved to abdicate in favour of his son and close his life in well-earned repose. His first step was taken in the Netherlands, the home of his childhood, where, in the midst of a most impressive ceremony at Brussels, October 25, 1555, he explained his reasons, made a touching farewell to his people, and invested his son Philip with all the northern provinces. A few months later he gave up his Spanish kingdoms and the rest of his dominions. To his brother Ferdinand he yielded his imperial authority—that “ empire ” of which his grandfather Maximilian had said : “ It is a heavy burden with little gain therefrom.” Then, when he was at last free from crown and sceptre, he set sail for Spain and retired to the monastery of Yuste, in a sequestered valley in Estremadura, where he lived in seclu-

sion and pious observances until his death, at the age of fifty-eight, in September 1558.

In order to understand the later policy of Cosimo, it has been necessary to give this brief account of his lord and patron, Charles V. It was now with the son and successor, Philip II., that the Duke had to deal, but as by this time he had pretty well reached the summit of his ambition, he could afford to take a more independent position. The death of his father-in-law, the Viceroy of Naples, Don Pietro de Toledo, in 1553, had been a serious loss to him, for the Duke of Alva, who had succeeded Toledo, was far less reliable as an ally. Meantime the new Pope, who was a Neapolitan, had the most violent hatred of Spain, as the oppressor of his native province. His fixed purpose was to use all the power of the Church to free Italy from Spanish rule, and he at once joined France and Ferrara for that purpose. Venice, as usual, cautiously held aloof to see which side would win. As for Duke Cosimo, he fortified his castles and kept a sharp watch on Siena, Piombino, and other outlying places of his duchy. In order to strengthen his position he entered into negotiations with his former enemy, Ercole II., Duke of Ferrara, offering his eldest daughter Maria as bride to the heir of Ferrara, Alfonso.

This arrangement would have been carried out, but unfortunately the young Princess Maria, a girl of sixteen, died very suddenly. It was publicly announced that she had fallen a victim to the fever which was a constant danger of those unsanitary days; but the rumour which spread through Florence was that she had fallen in love with some one else, and that her father had poisoned her to hush up the

matter. At this distance of time it is impossible to trace out the truth of this and many similar reports, which have a way of making Duke Cosimo their central figure. The Court chroniclers of the time, if they allude to the subject, say that "Donna Maria died of fever, but that a romance of secret love and the poisoning of the princess by her father arose from the ill-will of the Florentine people, who could not forgive the fall of their Republic." However, in 1558, Don Alfonso of Ferrara was quite willing to marry Lucrezia, the third daughter of the Duke of Florence, although we are told that "she was inferior to her eldest sister in charm and appearance." Thereby hangs another tragic legend for, later on, Lucrezia, when Duchess of Ferrara, is said to have died of poison administered by her husband Alfonso II., but these reports are considered most untrustworthy. Lucrezia had been previously promised in marriage to Fabiano di Monte, the nephew of Pope Julius III., who, however, was no longer eligible on the death of his uncle the Pope.

Pope Paul IV. was not long in commencing hostilities against Spain by citing Charles V. and Philip as vassals who had failed in their feudal obligations, and seizing and imprisoning Garcilasso della Vega, Secretary of the Spanish Embassy at Rome. Upon this, the imperial troops crossed the frontier and entered the Campagna. The Pope begged for a truce, and took advantage of it to obtain French help; but when the Duc de Guise was recalled after the Battle of St. Quentin, Paul IV. was defenceless, and the Duke of Alba might easily have taken Rome. However, Philip II. had no wish to repeat the sack of the Eternal City in 1527, and granted peace on

easy terms ; but it was insisted that the possessions of the Colonna and other Roman nobles, which had been seized for the Pope's nephews, should be restored to their rightful owners. Paul IV. now turned all his energy to the work of the Inquisition, having made a treaty with Philip II. and granted full absolution to Alva, who implored his forgiveness for having borne arms against the Church. When Paul IV. died in August 1559, the hatred of the people for his acts of cruel repression burst forth, and the " Holy Office " of the Inquisition was taken by storm and destroyed, while the Pope's effigy was dragged with insult through the streets of Rome. The records of the Inquisition were destroyed, and seventy-two " heresiarchs, or rather infernal fiends," as Caraccioli called them, were suffered to escape.

Meantime there had been more changes in the rulers of Europe. Mary Tudor, Queen of England, was dead, and a mischance at a tournament had removed Henri II. and left France at the mercy of the Guise faction. The formidable society of the Jesuits had been founded by Ignatius Loyola, and the Great Treaty of Cateau-Cambr sis, signed in 1559, had restored some measure of peace to Europe after a contest of sixty years. Italy remained very much as the wars had left her, but the gallant little Sienese Republic of Montalcino was finally given to Duke Cosimo, and Corsica was yielded to Genoa. Philip II. having been refused by Elizabeth of England, was about to marry Elizabeth of France, the daughter of Catherine dei Medici, who wrote imploring Philip to " stop the Queen of England from playing the fool ! " She certainly was giving a great deal of trouble with her vacillation, for she kept Europe in

suspense by her doubtful attitude between the old faith and the new.

On December 26, 1559, Giovanni Angelo de' Medici—a Milanese not connected with the great Florentine family—was elected successor to Paul IV., and he took the name of Pius IV. He was a good man and a scholar, of kindly disposition, who only desired to live in peace with all men. He sent a friendly letter to Elizabeth, but Philip II., fearing a French intrigue, stopped the Nuncio on his way to England. Duke Cosimo had done his utmost to promote the election of Pius IV., and was not long in reaping the reward of his labours. His second son Giovanni, a lad of sixteen, was created a cardinal; and in the first year of his pontificate Pius IV. sent a Nuncio to reside permanently in Florence, thus showing this city an honour which it had never received before; the first Nuncio being Monsignor Giovanni Campeggio, Bishop of Bologna.

The shores of the Mediterranean being never free from the danger of attack by Turkish corsairs, Cosimo desired to found an Order of Knights for the defence of all that coast, and also as an example “of honourable distinction in arms and courteous customs of chivalry,” and for this purpose, and “also concerning other matters,” he desired to consult with the new Pope. Having received a cordial invitation to Rome, the Duke of Florence left his eldest son Francesco in charge of the government, and set forth in great state with the Duchess Eléonora, his wife, and his son, the cardinal. Passing by way of Siena he was received there with great pomp, and remained in the city several days, to break the journey. When Duke Cosimo reached Rome in the morning, he made a

magnificent, almost regal, entrance, for many Roman nobles and great personages came out to meet him, and the flower of his own Court, in splendid array, had followed him from Florence. In the evening the Duchess made her state entry with no less pomp, and they were both received with the highest honour by the Pope, and lodged in the "stanze," built by Innocent VIII. above the first courtyard of the Palace of St. Peter's.

Here the Duke and his party remained for two months, having long conferences with the Pope about the rules and religious observances of his new Order, and also discussing the important concerns of the Catholic Church. That "abominable plague of heresy" appeared to be spreading from its home in Germany, all over England and even into France, and Cosimo did his best to exhort the gentle Pope to show no mercy, and follow the example of his predecessor. He pointed out that while other states were troubled with these matters, he had succeeded in putting down heresy in Florence, and was rewarded by peace and tranquillity. On leaving Rome, Cosimo passed once more through Siena, where he remained some days, visiting the neighbourhood and seeing that good order was maintained. He then went on to Pisa, where he finally inaugurated his new Order, giving to it the name of San Stefano, Pope and Martyr, whose festival, on August 2, was the day of his memorable victory of Marciano, where Strozzi was defeated and the fall of Siena was assured.

All things seemed indeed to have prospered with Cosimo, for not the least of his personal triumphs had been the death of his deadly foe, Piero Strozzi, Marshall of France, at the siege of Thionville, by an

accidental shot from an arquebuse, in June 1558. The Duke had now outlived most of the irreconcilables, who would never forgive the treachery and cruelty of his destruction of Florentine freedom.

Not long afterwards the King of France offered his daughter in marriage to Francesco, the eldest son of the Duke of Florence. But Cosimo sent courteous thanks to the King, and declined the honour of this alliance, as in his devotion to the House of Austria he hoped to find greater means of promotion. He therefore sent his son, with a splendid escort, to the Court of the King of Spain, in order that "he might see the ways and customs of other princes, and by studying their methods of government become more wise." The Duke himself had suffered from ill-health for some time, and he felt that it was important for his heir to gain all possible experience before he should succeed to the duchy. It is quite possible that the example of the Emperor Charles V. had some influence on the mind of Cosimo, and that he was already considering the plan of retiring in favour of his son, or rather taking the young prince into a kind of partnership, a scheme which he carried out some years later.



Anderson, photo.

Bronzino : Florence.

BIANCA CAPELLO.

CHAPTER XX

Duke Cosimo builds bridges, fortresses, etc.—The Palazzo Vecchio had been embellished for him ; then he rebuilds the Pitti Palace for his abode—Patronage of art—Benvenuto Cellini and others—Domestic troubles—Tragic death of his two sons, Cardinal Giovanni and Garzia—The Duchess Eléonora dies of grief—Strange rumours—His daughter Isabella marries a Roman noble, the Duke of Bracciano.

AT this period of triumph and success, when all things seemed to prosper with Cosimo, Duke of Florence, and when the great dominions acquired by crime and bloodshed were assured to him by his astute diplomacy, we may pause to consider the public works which he has left behind. This cruel, grasping, clever prince had all the instincts of a Medici for show and magnificence, and fortunately these often took the form of most useful undertakings. He made canals, such as that one from Livorno to Pisa ; he drained the marshes round that city, and also in the Maremma of Siena and the Val di Chiana, purifying the air and providing fresh land for agriculture. He made lakes, such as that of Frassineto, near Camaldoli, and that of the Val di Lamia ; and also aqueducts to bring the waters of the Mugnone into Florence, and another at Pisa.

But above all he was a great builder of bridges, the greatest boon in a country so full of rivers as Tuscany, as we see from the names of those which

still remain, beginning with the Arno, over which the Ponte Santa Trinità, which had been swept away in the great flood of 1557, was rebuilt from designs of Ammanati. Cosimo also restored the Ponte alla Carraja, and gave the jewellers the shops still occupied by that trade on the Ponte Vecchio. Then follow the rivers Arbia, Mugnone, Chiana, Ombrone, Elsa, Ema, and many others, all crossed by the Duke's bridges. It would be too long to enumerate the fortresses, towers of defence, and fortifications which he built in Florence, Pisa, Siena, Livorno, and all the cities of his dominions. Cosimo also made new roads and repaired the old ones throughout Tuscany, but these, like the castles, may be looked upon as needful works for military defence.

As we pass through Florence, we are reminded at every step of Duke Cosimo. Beginning with the Palazzo Vecchio—which in 1540, at the time of his marriage with Eléonora de Toledo, he had enlarged by del Tasso, including in it the two palaces at the rear—the Council Chamber was greatly improved and the wide staircase built, besides many other changes to make it suitable for the luxurious dwelling of a Court, and no longer the simple massive palace of the people. But after ten years of rule, this was not splendid enough for the Duke, and he moved to the immense palace belonging to the noble family of the Pitti, who had never been able to finish the building, and in 1549 sold it to the Duchess Eléonora, with all the farms and orchards round it. These were turned into magnificent gardens, partly on the lower ground, then rising up the slope to the hill above. "Here all kinds of trees were planted, and shrubs and green lawns, and beautiful bowers, and every

kind of fountain and water-works, with grottoes and vases and statues and other delights, which cannot be imagined unless they are seen." The Duchess took great interest in collecting plants, flowers, and fruit trees from all Tuscany. Mannucci goes on to describe the wonderful passage which was made from the Palazzo Vecchio, over the "Uffizi" (or offices), to the Pitti, as a "way in the air" by which, in any danger, the Duke might pass quickly and secretly from one palace to the other. This was built later, on the marriage of his eldest son Francesco, who was to live in the Palazzo Vecchio. We can understand the satisfaction of the Duchess Eléonora in her new home, with her young children, away from the haunting memory of past tragedies in the Palazzo Vecchio. This great lady was not popular in Florence, where the people found her insupportable for her cold pride and dull solemnity. She never forgot that she was a Spaniard, and obtained many privileges for her fellow-countrymen in Florence; the Spanish Chapel in Santa Maria Novella was specially granted to them, and she was always a great friend to the newly risen company of the Jesuits. Cellini gives an amusing account of her dislike to his light and frivolous character, and her constant opposition to him.

In the Piazza della Signoria, the Loggia dei Lanzi reminds us that the name was given to this ancient and beautiful series of arcades by Cosimo, who used it as a meeting-place for his Swiss body-guard, which was constantly on duty for his personal protection, so little trust had he in his subjects. The admirers of Duke Cosimo's despotic rule make much of his encouragement of trade and commerce in Florence,

and it will be interesting to trace briefly his connection with the ancient Guilds of the City. He made various alterations in the statutes, and established four Universities to include the Fourteen Lesser Guilds, giving them certain privileges; but it was scarcely in a kindly spirit that he ordered "any servant found idling in the streets or hanging about for want of work at the evening tolling of the bell called the 'Campana delle Armi,' shall have his right hand amputated." He evidently took a special interest in bells, for he ordered that the big bell of the Duomo should be rung at half-past three daily, to announce to the workmen that their day was over. Many of them lived outside the city gates, which were always closed at dusk.

Duke Cosimo certainly made an effort to revive the prosperity of the "Guild of Wool." In 1543 he wished to embellish the Palazzo Vecchio with woven tapestries, and for this purpose he induced a number of tapestry workers from Lyons to settle in Florence, and established a weaving manufactory. This industry quickly developed, and the Florentine painters, Bronzino and Salviati, designed cartoons for the weavers. However, by a curious irony of fate, the Guild of Cloth and Wool Merchants, closely connected with this useful work, was almost ruined by another enterprise of Duke Cosimo, when in 1561 he instituted the "Military Order of the Knights of San Stefano." Many wealthy merchants, wishing to secure for their families the honour of the military cross, with all its privileges, disdained to continue the exercise of their trade.

In the same year the Duke of Florence unwittingly gave the final death-blow to the old Guild of the

“Calimala,” or wool-merchants, by his protectionist instinct, which induced him to forbid the importation of serges and light woollen cloths from England and Flanders. We have no space to dwell fully upon the extremely interesting account of the various Guilds of Florence at this time, but we may still see one useful addition which Cosimo made to the Mercato Vecchio, in rebuilding the Loggia del Pesce as a special place for the selling of fish, which had proved a nuisance in the general market. A small market for the sale of fruit and vegetables was also added close by.

With regard to Duke Cosimo's encouragement of art, we notice that in 1562 he renamed the Accademia di San Luca, first held in the cloisters of La 'Nunziata, as the “Accademia delle Belle Arte,” uniting the three fine arts—Sculpture, Painting, and Architecture—under the motto “Levare di terra al cielo nostro intelletto.” Cosimo felt that as a Medici he had a traditional position as patron of art; but there was no generosity about his nature. “Cautious, little-minded, meddling, with a true Florentine's love of bargaining and playing cunning tricks, he pretended to protect the arts, but did not understand the part he had assumed. He was always short of money, and surrounded by old avaricious servants, through whose hands his meagre presents passed. As a connoisseur, he did not trust his own judgment, thus laying himself open to the intrigues of inferior artists. . . .”*

Benvenuto Cellini gives us a very vivid account of the difficulties he met with during the period he worked in Florence for the Duke, and of that great

* J. A. Symonds.

day of his life when finally his bronze statue of Perseus with the head of Medusa was uncovered in the Loggia dei Lanzi, and welcomed with an outburst of enthusiasm. But besides this, he had made other works to adorn the Duke's palaces, and it was remembered with awe that he was the sculptor of that waxen bust of Duke Alessandro which was hung in the Church of S. Annunziata, and which fell to the ground three days before that Duke was murdered by Lorenzino.

To Cellini we are indebted for the fine Ganymede in the Uffizi, and for various precious objects in the Collection of Gems which he carved for the Duchess Eléonora. The famous crucifix in the Church of San Lorenzo is his work, and he also made a colossal bust of Duke Cosimo to be placed in *Porte Stello*, at the splendid harbour of Porto Ferrajo in the Island of Elba.

All these and many other masterpieces were forgotten when Cellini came to compete with Bandinelli and Ammanati for the great fountain of Neptune in the Piazza della Signoria, and the task was given to a rival. Of other artists patronised by Cosimo were Bronzino, who painted portraits of all his family; Vasari, who covered the walls of his palaces with his great exploits; Tribolo, who adorned his gardens with fountains and statues. Not only the grounds of the Duke's great palace in Florence were thus decorated, but he bestowed great care and expense upon the gardens of his various villa residences, especially Castello, where his mother died and where he was to spend the closing years of his life.

While he was surrounded by artists of second rank, Cosimo, notwithstanding all his earnest entreaties, was unable to persuade Michelangelo to return to

Florence and complete the statues of the Medici in the Church of San Lorenzo. The great master, born in 1474, was now of advanced age, and having completed the "Last Judgment," he was next engaged by Paul III. to superintend the building of St. Peter's, "and to this task, undertaken for the repose of his soul without emolument, he devoted the last years of his life." Thus the tombs of the Medici were destined to remain unfinished. "Lorenzo's features are but rough-hewn; so is the face of Night. Day seems struggling into shape beneath his mass of rock, and Twilight shows everywhere the tooth-dint of the chisel." *

Up to the point where we have followed the story of Duke Cosimo, all has prospered with him, except for the loss of his infant son and of his daughter Maria. But in the year 1561 there came to him news of the death of his young daughter Lucrezia, who had been married two years before, at the age of fifteen, to Alfonso II. d'Este, recently Duke of Ferrara. In after-years the report spread that she had been poisoned by her husband, but for this tragic story there is probably no foundation. Lucrezia was the third daughter, and her elder sister Isabella had been married the same year to a great Roman noble, Paolo Giordano Orsini, of whom we shall hear more later on.

In the year 1562 a tragic disaster came upon the family of Cosimo. A change to the sea-coast had been recommended for the Duchess Eléonora, who was out of health, and the Duke set forth on a journey beyond Leghorn, with his wife and his three sons, Giovanni the cardinal aged nineteen, Garzia who

* J. A. Symonds,

was just fifteen, and young Ferdinando who was barely thirteen. As we have seen in the last chapter, the eldest son Francesco had been sent to pay his homage to Philip II. at the Court of Spain.

The Duke was anxious to visit the fortified places on the coast below Livorno, built for protection against the Turkish pirates, and he was also looking forward to some hunting with his sons. The following is the account of what happened, as given by the Court chroniclers, and especially by Beldini, the Duke's head physician, "which things I have seen and written."

There was at this time an epidemic of malarial fever in the south of Tuscany, and it was especially virulent in the unhealthy Maremma. Giovanni was the first to sicken with this terrible fever at Rosignano; he was taken to Leghorn, and received every care. The doctor Baldini gives a very circumstantial account of his sickness and death on November 20, adding that his father the Duke was fetched to see him in the middle of the night. "No earthly remedies were of any avail for this youth of the most handsome presence and most excellent behaviour, tenderly beloved by his father, who had the greatest hopes for him; . . . and he being dead, his body was borne to Pisa, of which city he had been made Archbishop. . . ." Here the Duke took his wife and his two other sons, who were also ill with fever, in the hope that they would recover. But Don Garzia, after an illness of twenty-one days, "passed to a better life [on December 12], a youth of the highest expectations and destined for great things; who died at the age of fifteen. Of whose death when the Duchess heard she, having been ill for many days, became much worse so that, to the

infinite grief of the Duke, she also was overcome by the stroke of death. . . ." 1562

On December 18, the day of his wife Eléonora's death, Cosimo wrote a very full and most circumstantial account of all this tragedy to his eldest son Francesco, at the Court of Spain, with careful and minute details of the last hours of his two sons and their mother.

Having given the official and Court version of these sad events, it is necessary to allude to the story which for several centuries has been one of the stock-tragedies of Medici crime, has been made the subject of a tragic drama by Alfieri and other writers, and has been generally believed by the enemies of Cosimo I. We are all familiar with the story of the two brothers going out hunting together, of their dispute as to which of them had killed a certain deer, and the subsequent struggle in which Garzia, by an unlucky thrust, kills his brother Giovanni. Then we are told that the Duke, in a fit of frenzy at the death of his favourite Giovanni, puts his younger son to death with his own hands, and that the unfortunate mother dies of a broken heart.

Alfieri's version is a very wild romance, which does not even give the name of Giovanni, but puts in his place that of "Piero," then a boy of eight, evidently confusing him—as so many writers have done—with the Piero who died as an infant in 1546.

In these more humane and law-abiding days, our latest historians are not disposed to believe in past deeds of savage violence without such positive proof as, at this distance of time, cannot often be obtained. But "qui s'excuse, s'accuse," and the extraordinarily minute details regarding that malarial fever, written

by a Court historian under the watchful eye of a later Grand Duke ; or even the long circumstantial letter written by Cosimo himself to his son at the Spanish Court—at the very moment when he was supposed to be overwhelmed with grief—are neither of them perfectly reliable evidence, when we remember the character of Duke Cosimo and his small respect for human life. In any case the verdict may be “ Not proven ! ”

There was terrible tragedy for the Duke in the loss of his two promising sons and their mother, who had been his devoted companion for twenty-three years. Two solemn funerals followed each other in San Lorenzo at Florence—one of Cardinal Giovanni, and then of the Duchess Eléonora and her best beloved son Garzia, “ the light of her eyes.” They were laid to rest together in the crypt of the Medici Mausoleum, where Cosimo himself was later to take his place by their side.

It was most important to the Duke that he should have one son a Cardinal to keep his interests in remembrance in Rome, and his first step after the death of Giovanni was to induce Pius IV. to raise Ferdinando, a boy of thirteen, to the vacant dignity. He sent for his son Francesco to help him in the defence of the Mediterranean coast, which was again attacked by the Turkish fleets and corsairs, and he was now able to make great use of his Military Order of St. Stephen. But Florence being an inland power, the Duke was very deficient in vessels, and the chronicler mentions with great pride that on this occasion he was able to send ten galleys to sea. Still the new line of forts along the shore of Tuscany was a great protection to the people, who were encouraged

to store their grain, and live as much as possible within walled towns. Those of Talamone Port' Ercole, Orbetello, and San Stefano formed the Spanish "Praesidia," which was ruled by the Viceroy of Naples. But the garrisons had no means of obtaining any supplies save fish, except by the pleasure of Duke Cosimo. The coveted port of Piombino had been his for a time, but the jealousy of Genoa had induced Philip II. to retain it in his own possession after 1557.

However, at this period—1563—Duke Cosimo was most anxious to be on good terms with both the King of Spain and his uncle the Emperor Ferdinand, as after his great good fortune in the past his ambition had risen to the point of desiring a royal marriage for his son. He, who had once been denied Marguerite the illegitimate daughter of Charles V., now raised his eyes towards a real Archduchess, the youngest daughter of the Emperor Ferdinand, as a bride for his heir Francesco. Everything was in his favour, for the division of power after the death of Charles had made the Duke's position more independent, and if he could arrange this great alliance it would be another means towards his own advancement above all the other ruling princes in Italy. Nothing short of absolute precedence would satisfy the grasping desire of this scion of the Medici, that family of whom it was said that "All things came to them in the end."

After the tragic loss of his two sons, Giovanni and Garzia, there remained to Cosimo only four of his nine children; these were three sons, Francesco, aged twenty-two, Ferdinando, the newly made cardinal of fourteen, and Pietro, a wild, unmanageable child of eight. His one daughter, Isabella, was

distinguished for her beauty and talent, and said to be a musician and a poetess. She had been married in 1558, at the age of sixteen, to a great Roman noble, Paolo Giordino Orsini, Prince of Bracciano, a name too closely associated with the frail Vittoria Accoramboni—with coming tragedy and disaster—for us to believe that the marriage can ever have been a happy one. In any case, Isabella seems to have been quite willing to leave her husband and return to cheer her father's life soon after the death of the Duchess Eléonora, and she at once became the centre of all there was of gaiety and amusement in the Florentine life of those days.

CHAPTER XXI

Marriage of Francesco, the Duke's eldest son, to the Archduchess Joanna, daughter of the Emperor Ferdinand—Story of Bianca Capello—Cosimo takes his son into a share of the government—Election of Pope Pius V., fierce inquisitor—Pietro Carnesecchi, a Florentine, impeached for heresy, betrayed by his friend Duke Cosimo, who is rewarded by the Pope with the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany—Death of Cosimo I. (1574)—His character.

WHEN the Emperor Ferdinand died in July 1564 and was succeeded by his son Maximilian II., negotiations had been carried so far with the Duke of Florence that the marriage of his eldest son Francesco with the young Archduchess Joanna was definitely settled to take place the following January. Cosimo had attained his heart's desire, and it did not trouble him much that the great Council of Trent, after labouring for eighteen years, had been dissolved the previous December without succeeding in uniting divided Christendom. It was of some concern to him that the Pope's authority was now more absolute than ever, for he was one of the chosen friends and advisers of Pius IV.; but his thoughts were chiefly engaged upon a scheme of his own.

Duke Cosimo was not old in point of years—he was only forty-five—but he had reigned since the age of eighteen, and may have felt weary of the incessant strain of personal government; he may have had a

desire to train his son in the art of ruling, or it may have been a desire to imitate the Emperor Charles V. ; but in any case he resolved to take Francesco into a kind of partnership with him. This was, in fact, all that his appearance of resignation amounted to, for he kept a very firm hand upon all real power, both with regard to foreign and domestic policy ; but he entrusted his son with much of the routine of government. This had the advantage of placing the young prince in a position of authority before his splendid marriage, for which great preparations were made. The princely pair were to live in the Palazzo Vecchio, which had been Cosimo's own home for his first ten years of married life. But the ancient palace of a free people was to be entirely embellished and freshly decorated to prepare it for the coming of a Grand Duchess, the daughter of an Emperor.

Vasari was commissioned to paint frescoes on the walls, and, in order that the subjects might be pleasing to an Austrian princess, the vestibule of the splendid court was covered with pictures of towns in her native land. In the lunettes were placed copies of medals commemorating the victories of Cosimo I., the massive columns were covered with stucco ornaments on a gold ground, and Verocchio's fountain of the " Boy with the Dolphin " was placed in the centre as a finishing touch to the beautiful " cortile."

Francesco went in state to the Court of the Emperor Maximilian II., his future brother-in-law, and the journey to Florence of the Princess Joanna was like a royal progress. She entered the city with a crown on her head, under a stately baldachino, and the wedding was celebrated in the Church of San

Lorenzo with the greatest magnificence, while the people were entertained with festivities for a whole week. The poor lady herself had no happy lot in store for her. We are told that she was unattractive, cold and haughty in manner, and that from the first she felt that this marriage was beneath her dignity. We wonder how long it was before she discovered that her husband's affections were already entirely bestowed upon another woman, the beautiful adventuress, Bianca Capello, whose elopement from Venice was the scandal of the day.

It was more than a year before his marriage that Francesco had met this Venetian beauty, with her ruddy golden hair, who was already disenchanted of her runaway marriage with the bank-clerk, Piero Bonaventuri, on whose head the Republic of Venice had set a price. The heir of Florence fell passionately in love with Bianca, loaded her with presents, and gave her the splendid palace in the Via Maggio, still known by her name. The intrigue was carried on with some slight amount of concealment during his father's life, but Francesco's devotion to his mistress remained constant, and he married her after Joanna's death in 1578. The story of Bianca Capello, of her first husband Piero's murder, and of her own adventurous life, is so well known and has been so thoroughly told,* that I will not dwell upon it here. Still it is a curious fact, as showing the easy immorality of opinion, that the great lady Isabella Duchess of Bracciano, daughter of the then Grand Duke Cosimo, should show strong friendship for Bianca, who on one occasion breaks off a letter abruptly, saying that "she is sent for by the Signora Isabella

* *Ladies of the Italian Renaissance.* Christopher Hare.

dei Medici to accompany her and the Cardinal Ferdinando to a great hunting party at Pisa the fifth day of December 1573."

At the time when her husband and sister-in-law were thus amusing themselves, the unfortunate Archduchess Joanna was left in the grim Palazzo Vecchio with her little girls, of whom the youngest, the fifth daughter, Maria, afterwards wife of Henri IV. of France, was still an infant. We can scarcely be surprised that the neglected wife wrote pitiful letters of complaint to her brother, the Emperor Maximilian II., but he could give her no redress and, for the sake of the family honour, his only wish was to hush up the scandal as much as possible. Hers was indeed a sad story, but it was no isolated case in the Medici family, in Florence of the sixteenth century.

The gay and accomplished Isabella, the last remaining daughter of Cosimo I., the leader of Florentine amusements, was herself destined to meet with a terrible fate some three years later than the date of her hunting invitation to Bianca. She remained in safety until after the death of her father; then her husband, the Duke of Bracciano who wished to marry the notorious Vittoria Accoramboni, enticed her to his Villa of Cerreto Guidi, near Empoli, and there murdered her with his own hands in the dead of night. The next day it was announced in Florence that the princess had died suddenly of apoplexy, but there appears to be little doubt as to the truth of this tragedy, of which indeed Isabella's death was only the First Act.

We must leave this tale of horror incomplete to return to the history of Cosimo himself after his son's marriage. He had now reached almost the

highest point of his success as a ruler. His sharp and sanguinary measures had put down rebellion at home and abroad ; but he still had spies within the city—almost in every household, wherever men gathered together in Florence or in cities where his suspicions were roused. So intimate was the knowledge of the secret police, and so prompt their action, that the Venetian envoy, Fedeli, accustomed to the ways of the Ten, had yet greater awe of the unknown prisons in Florence from which no news ever came forth. The unjust law of the “ Polverina ”—by which the whole property of exiles was confiscated, and also that which their heirs might acquire—had added greatly to the Duke’s wealth ; he constantly exacted new taxes, import and export duties, gifts and loans, fines and confiscations ; and besides all these sources of income, he was himself a banker and a merchant, carrying on a prosperous trade with his war-galleys in wool, grain, silk, and leather. Money was an absolute necessity for his ambitious schemes. He was able to revive the national militia on a large scale, and to keep in his pay—besides his own private Swiss and Spanish guards—captains in Germany, Switzerland, Corsica, and elsewhere, to raise mercenaries if required at any moment.

It was thus that he began to make himself a power in Europe ; he could help Charles IX. in his war against the Huguenots, he was able to send troops and well-mounted galleys to fight against the Turks in the defence of Malta in 1565, and when the old Sultan Solyman himself set forth from Constantinople, in 1566, on that eventful campaign against Hungary and the Empire, in which the Turkish veteran died in his tent before the siege of Szigeth, the contingent

sent by Duke Cosimo amounted to three thousand picked foot-soldiers.

In December 1565 the Duke lost a faithful supporter in Pius IV. It was a matter of extreme importance to him who should be the next Pope, and he was fortunate in the election of his friend, the Dominican monk, Michele Ghislieri. The new Pope, Pius V., was an ardent Inquisitor, unbending and pitiless, an ascetic with high ideals and unswerving faith; but his aims demanded unity of government and despotic power, and he could be trusted to steadily uphold the interests of the Medici ruler of Florence. Cosimo had no repugnance to the Inquisition, although his cold nature was incapable of religious zeal; the stake was only another means to attain that discipline which his soul loved to enforce. An incident which occurred the following year shows him as a willing instrument of persecution to serve his own private ends, and casts a lurid light upon his character.

A noble Florentine named Pietro Carnesecchi had entered the Papal service, and, under Clement VII., had become Protonotary Apostolic, with great influence and hopes of advancement. After the death of the Pope he retired into secular life and came under the influence of Valdès in 1540. Some time later Carnesecchi was cited to Rome and tried for heresy, but he denied everything and was absolved. In 1552 he published some of the works of Valdès, and was again condemned, but on the death of Paul IV., when the people broke open the prisons of the Inquisition and burnt the records, he was declared innocent by the new Pope, Pius IV., of milder nature. After this he lived at Rome, Naples, and Florence, always keeping

up his intercourse with those who held the doctrines of the Reformation. On the election of the Head of the Inquisition as Pope Pius V., Pietro thoroughly appreciated his dangerous position, but he trusted in the protection of Duke Cosimo, to whom he had been a warm friend and valuable adviser. His confidence in one who never considered anything but his own interest was destined to be rudely destroyed, for when sitting as an honoured guest at the Duke's table he was suddenly arrested by order of the dread Inquisition, and carried a prisoner to Rome. Here he was tried on a number of charges, of most of which he had already been acquitted, and after many months of cruel imprisonment he was finally beheaded and burnt on October 21, 1567. Yet Carnesecchi had published nothing of his own against the faith; he was a man of blameless life, who had kept all the ordinances of the Church; and he was only accused of matters of opinion in his conversation and private letters.

As for the treachery of Cosimo towards this noble friend of his, it had been a well-considered act of useful policy, for which he reaped the full reward when Pope Pius V. bestowed upon him the long-coveted title of Grand Duke of Tuscany. This was perhaps the crowning triumph of his life, and the Court chroniclers give a very full account of the great ceremony at Rome, where the Duke of Tuscany went in state to receive his new honours. He was publicly crowned in the Chapel of the Vatican, in the presence of all the cardinals and a splendid company of great nobles, "on account of his great zeal for religion and his good justice," as we read engraved upon his royal crown, and also in the Pope's Brief.

Henceforth his designation was no longer "Eccellenza Illustrissima," but "Altezza Serenissima," which would distinguish him from all the other Dukes in Italy, and settle for ever any question of precedence. Cosimo did not go empty-handed to Rome; he presented to the Pope a splendid chalice, inlaid with finest gold, a buckle of choice diamonds, and two priestly robes; also a chasuble and a cape of cloth of gold. In return he received from Pius V. the Golden Rose, that supreme gift which the Pope blesses every year and presents to some faithful Prince of the Church.

There was one shadow on the brilliant occasion: the Emperor refused to ratify this deed of the Pope, and his ambassador ostentatiously left the chapel in the middle of the ceremony. Philip II. also declared against it, and there were loud protests from the Dukes of Ferrara, Mantua, and Savoy. But the Grand Duke of Tuscany went home in triumph and caused his portrait to be painted, wearing the radiated crown, with the Florentine Lily in the centre—holding in his hand the sceptre with the Medici "palle" and the lily above—and clothed in his royal robes.

It is a curious fact that after the date (1569) of this satisfied ambition and realised supremacy, Cosimo seems to have lost his hold on the reality of power. His failing health may have had something to do with the increasing negligence and self-indulgence which put him out of touch with affairs, and were such a contrast to the keen insight and constant vigilance which had won him his successes. There was much to worry him in his domestic affairs. Unpleasant gossip could not fail to reach him with regard to the more than frivolous behaviour of his

only surviving daughter, Isabella, Duchess of Bracciano, to whom he had given the Villa of Poggia Imperiale. The duel in which a young Court page, Lelio Torelli, lost his life had not been favourable to her reputation. Then, too, the strained relations between his eldest son Francesco and his wife Joanna, sister of the present Emperor, were a cause of anxiety, as the succession was not yet secured, for so far she had only given birth to daughters. The Grand Duke's youngest son, Pietro, now a boy of fifteen, had grown up wild and passionate, entirely beyond his control, and leading a dissolute life with evil companions. The only son in whom he could take any pride, the young Cardinal Ferdinando, was away at Rome, a cold and distant critic of the doings at home.

From all these uncongenial surroundings the Grand Duke sought for distraction in the company of more than one Florentine lady of easy morality. Amongst these he was specially attracted to Camilla Martelli, the daughter of a certain Antonio Martelli who carried on his trade in the Via de' Servi, and the lady became his inseparable companion. This came to the ears of Pope Pius V., and the stern ascetic moralist, indignant that scandal should rest on his newly created Grand Duke, gave him the uncompromising advice: "Marry the woman and make your peace with God and the Church." This probably fell in with Cosimo's own feeling; it would certainly annoy his family, and also add to his own comfort in his increasing ill-health. The marriage was very quietly performed, and the bride was told she would not bear the title of Grand Duchess, but would be simply called "Signora," like any other private lady. In

fact, it was a kind of morganatic marriage, but his sons were not willing to acknowledge her in any way.

After his marriage the Grand Duke appears to have lived almost entirely at the beautiful Villa Castello, which for him must have been full of haunting memories of his loving mother, Maria Salviati, and of the happy days he had spent in those beautiful gardens, which of late years had been decorated with all the quaint talent of Tribolo. For some time before his death he almost entirely lost the use of his limbs, and after much suffering, he died, at the age of fifty-five, "about the 19th hour" on April 21, 1574, at the palace now known to us as the Pitti, but then called the Palace of the Grand Duke. The Court chroniclers tell us that a comet appeared at the time of his death, "as though to announce the passing away of so great a personage." The body was embalmed and prepared for burial with great ceremonial, clothed in white armour all but the hands and the head, and robed in the stately mantle and other garments in which he was crowned by Pius V. The famous crown was placed on his head, the sceptre in the right hand, and the sword at his left side; the Collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece round his neck, and also the smaller Order, with a red cross, of the Military Society of San Stefano, of which Cosimo had been the first Grand Master. After the lying in state the body was borne by the Knights of San Stefano, accompanied in splendid procession by "the three Princes—Francesco, Cardinal Ferdinando, and Pietro—with all the Court, by the Feudatory Lords, the Magistrates, the Bishops and Archbishops of the State, by more than two thousand Priests and Friars, by a great number of Foot-soldiers,

by Cavalry in light and heavy armour, and all sorts of persons. . . .” When they reached the Church of San Lorenzo and the funeral ceremonies were ended, pompous orations were delivered both in Latin and the “vulgar tongue,” to the praise and glory of the Grand Duke. Italy must have been full of his fame, for there were more orations in the Church of San Stefano in Pisa, in other cities of the state, and even in Rome.

It is curious, as showing how customs endure, that mottoes were hung about everywhere through the city, bearing the inscription “Lutto” (grief), as to this day is still done as a sign of mourning in country places in Italy.*

By his will, the Grand Duke Cosimo left to his son the Cardinal Ferdinando his estates of S. Mezzano in the Upper Val d’Arno, the palace of La Petraia, with all its belongings, the Palace and the vineyard which he had in Rome, and an income of three thousand scudi a month from the customs of Florence. He could not foresee that Ferdinando would succeed him as Grand Duke on the tragic death of his brother Francesco and Bianca his wife, in 1587.

To his son Don Pietro, Cosimo left the splendid villa and domain of Poggio a Cajano, a famous hunting resort on the banks of the river Ombrone, at the foot of Monte Albano, half way between Florence and Pistoia. Pietro appears to have exchanged this villa for that of Cafaggiolo, where a terrible tragedy occurred two years after his father’s death. He had married a very beautiful young girl, Eléonora de Toledo, a niece of his mother’s, and she seems to

* I last saw this at Pratovecchio, in the Casentino, at the picturesque funeral of the “Sindaco.”

have aroused his jealousy, for in his lawless rage he murdered her, thus adding another to the long tale of horrors connected in some way with his family.

Cosimo left a much more generous legacy to an illegitimate son, Don Giovanni, whose mother was a certain Eléonora degli Albizzi. This youth appears to have been the most eligible member of his family ; we find him later employed as ambassador to Venice by his half-brother the Grand Duke Francesco on the occasion of his marriage with Bianca Capello, immediately after the death of the unfortunate Archduchess Joanna. He was also popular at the French Court.

His endowment was " the possessions of Cerreto, all the lands which had been drained from the Arno in his time, or which might be in the future, a Palace in ' Parione ' ; all the rents which came from Spain, the mills which are at the Porta al Prato, and those which are outside that gate, the Mills at Pisa, and the steel factory, . . . and 1000 gold florins a year after the death of his mother, who was to enjoy this income for her life." This was a curious medley of property, by which Cosimo secured a fortune for his favourite child !

The widow, Camilla Martelli, was not forgotten in the will. She was to inherit all his personal garments, his furniture and ornaments, which were of no small value, and also an income of 4,000 gold florins a year. It is to be feared that the poor lady had very little enjoyment of this bequest, if indeed she ever received it, for on the succession of Francesco I. to his father's throne, he cruelly compelled the widow Camilla to take up her abode in a convent, where she was closely confined until her death in 1590. Her

one daughter Vittoria was married later to Cesare d'Este of the royal house of Ferrara, so that she would appear to have been treated with some amount of consideration by her half-brother. Certainly a marriageable princess was always a useful asset for a diplomatic arrangement.

With this small ray of sunshine we will bring to an end the story of the Grand Duke Cosimo and his family, lest, if we do but turn another page, we may come upon more records of tyranny and crime.

EPILOGUE

IN connection with this "Romance of a Medici Warrior," three striking figures in succession have taken possession of the stage. First stands forth Caterina Sforza, the Great Madonna of Forli, that supreme example of a warrior woman. When her husband Riario was murdered by the triumphant Orsi, her voice and presence alone could hold a rebellious city in check, and by the power of her will she could seize the citadel and secure the succession of her son. With magnificent courage, Caterina defended her capital and state from enemies on every side—those rival Italian rulers, who thought to find an easy prey in a defenceless woman.

Like a lioness at bay she fought against all the might of the Borgia Pope, until her last defences were stormed by overwhelming force and the heroic Lady of Forli was taken captive to Rome. Of all her five boys, only the youngest born, the son of her courtly Medici husband, inherited her brave spirit and dauntless energy.

In the life of this Medici warrior, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, we have seen displayed all the courage and fierce daring of his Sforza ancestors, whose exploits he far excelled in magnificent audacity.

So great was the confidence he inspired that François I. always declared that, had Giovanni been

by his side, he would have won that fatal Battle of Pavia, and the fortunes of Europe had been changed. It may well be so, for never had leader so complete and supreme a command over his soldiers as this Medici captain who had trained them himself, spent a princely fortune on their behalf, and inspired them with his own passionate enthusiasm. Yet this gallant condottiere exhausted his short and brilliant life in fighting desperate battles for other people—in serving prince and Pope—mostly without pay, not even receiving, until too late, the long-promised guerdon of sea-girt Fano on which he had set his heart as a corsair home for his Black Bands in time of peace. As far indeed as his own fortunes were concerned, Giovanni's life was a splendid failure, like his mother's.

We pass on from the lion to the fox. The success denied to the hero of many battles was reserved for his only son, the cold, crafty Cosimo, who, from his earliest childhood, had known how to be silent and bide his time, like more than one of his Medici forefathers. Then, when the calculated moment of action came, and a crown was within his reach, no treachery, no crime was too astounding for this precocious youth of eighteen. Having achieved his end, and waded through blood to become Head of the State of Florence, he set himself with steady persistence to trample down the liberties of a free people and to rid himself of all those who had helped him to rise.

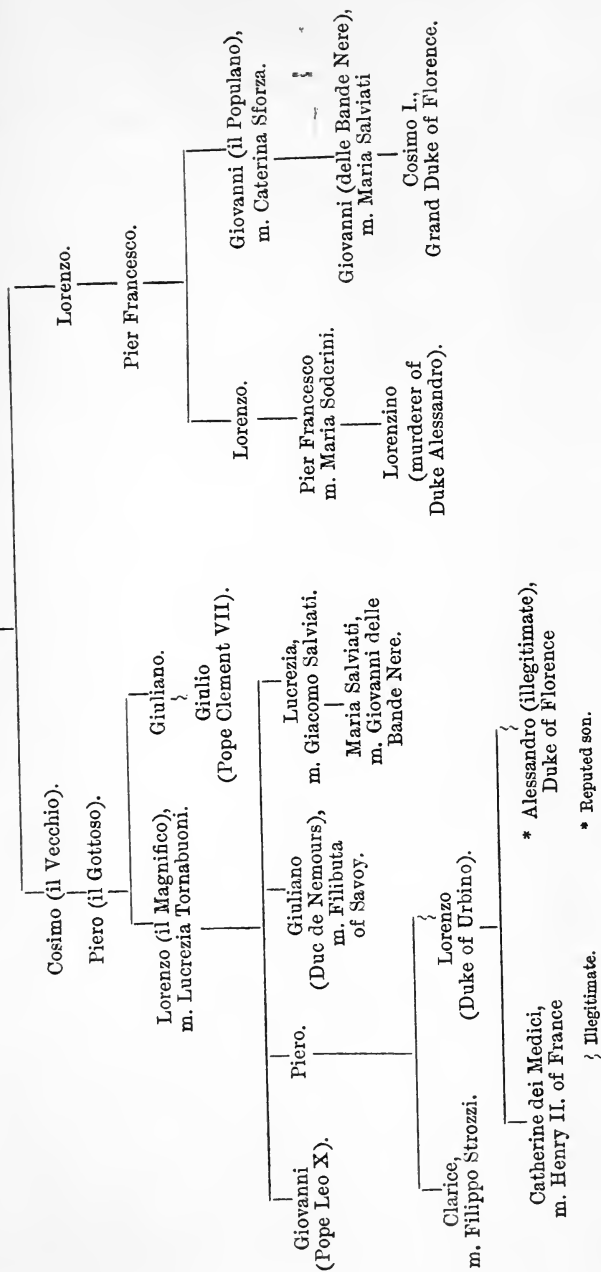
In his grasping, unrelenting course of self-advancement Cosimo attained in time the highest position which a Medici had ever reached, and became Grand Duke of all Tuscany—"Altezza Serenissima." Under his watchful eye courtly historians wrote his story and exalted his fame; told of his great deeds, his

princely pomp, his success as a patron of art; hailed him as a true Medici, another Lorenzo the Magnificent!

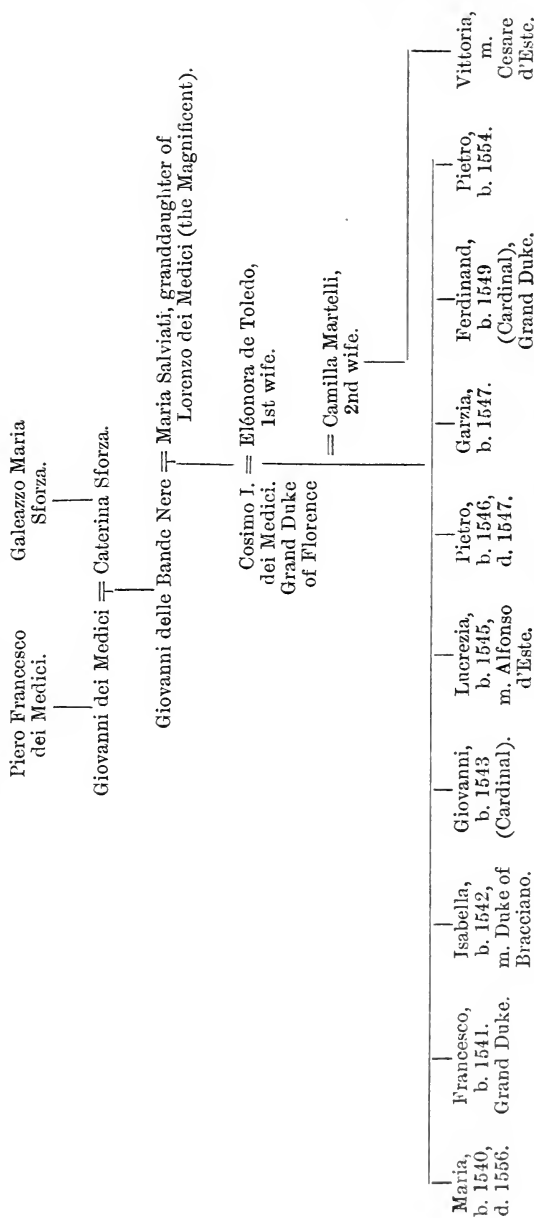
But when we read the tragic details of the Grand Duke's domestic life, the strange legends of passion and crime—"The reeling Faun, the sensual feast"—which cling around every member of his family, a student of heredity may remember another ancestor—a certain Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan—and thus trace back the hidden mystery of criminal instincts.

GENEALOGY OF THE MEDICI.—TABLE I

Giovanni di Bicci = Piccarda Donati.
(dei Medici).



GENEALOGY OF THE MEDICI.—TABLE II



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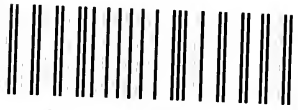


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